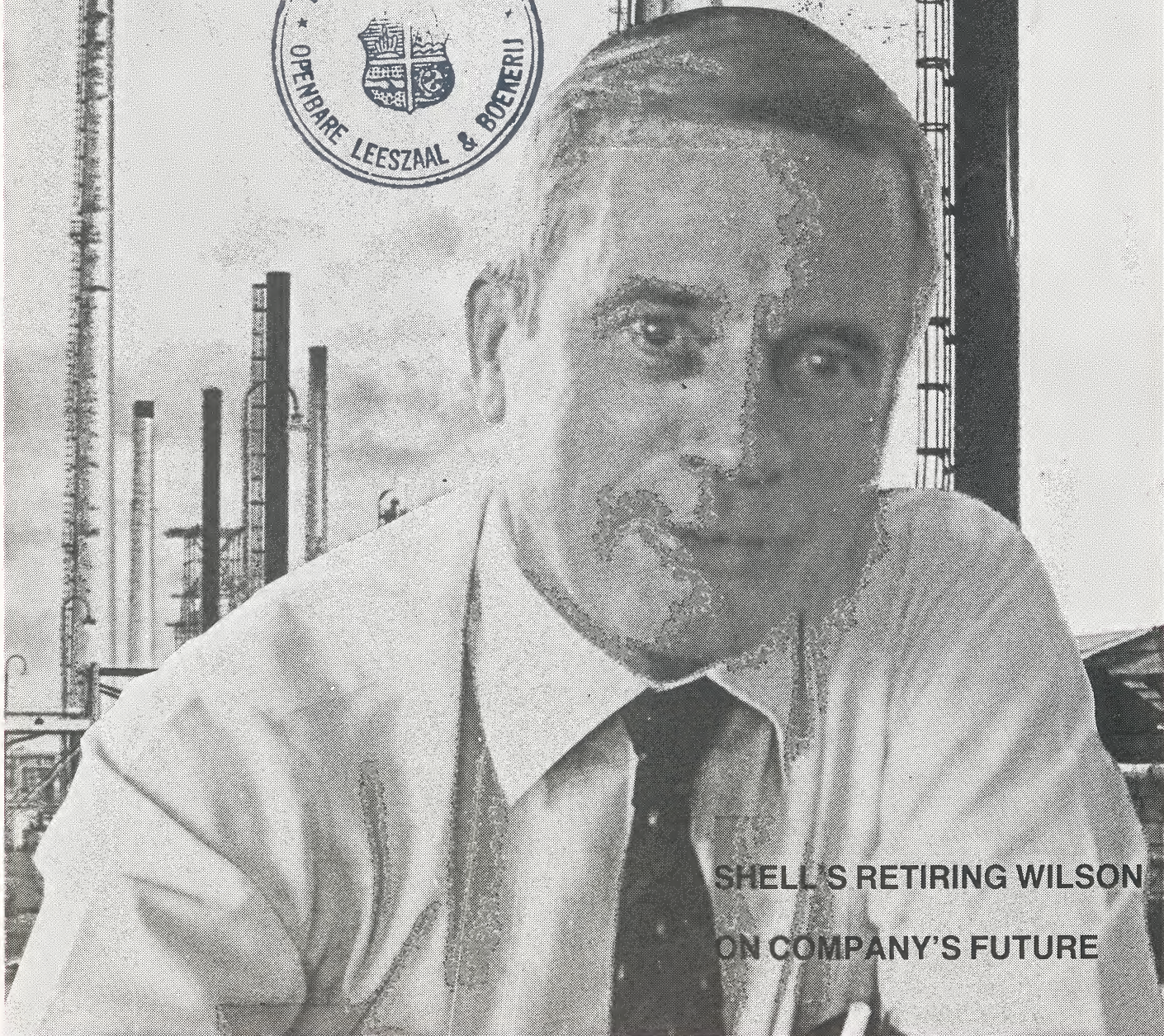


ARUBA'S FINANCIAL OUTLOOK  
PRECARIOUS

# ANTILLEN REVIEW

MAY - 7 1984



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**FROM THE EDITOR**

Let no one ever be deceived by the smallness of the Netherlands Antilles. In numbers of population it may not amount to much, the issues it faces and the problems it is confronted with deny the expression that 'small is beautiful'. Exciting, it is yes, and in no small measure. But he who expects this society to be anywhere close to the proverbial village, is utterly mistaken. Not only are the internal relations between the islands and the relation with Holland most complicated, its size on the world map of finance and trade stands in no relation to the geographical specks which represent the islands.

This disproportionate role of the country and the correspon-

ding high standard of living are largely the result of Holland's involvement with the Antilles during 350 years. To which should be added: much to its own advantage. The Hague's stated intention to sever the ties between the two countries in due course may have a reasonable ring to it, implementation should not be enacted before the Antilles are willing and ready for such a step. The special nature of the Antillean society indicated above places an extra responsibility on the Dutch. The traditional theories of de-colonization simply do not apply. If anything The Hague should show respect to the Antillean vox populi and stop forcing the country to move where it does not want to go.

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# Now what?

It finally happened. After years of Aruba stealing the political show, Curaçao suddenly began making headlines. The message was clear and simple: stop the nonsense! No status aparte for Aruba, no Antilles of the Five and certainly no cheap way out for the Dutch. Why this abrupt recantation of last year's Round Table Conference agreements? Because the financial implications were at long last being realized.

But do not fly any flags yet to celebrate the victory of common sense. The protest against what is decidedly an unhealthy development may not be all that sound itself. To disavow at this late hour last year's accords does not seem to be very realistic. It will certainly have the adverse effect of strengthening Aruba's separatist movement. It will also cause another period of time-consuming political debate. Something the country can ill afford. And last but not least it may further enhance the political power of those who took the initiative to promote the movement of protest: the Curaçao Chamber of Trade-Unions. And how desirable such a development would be depends on one's convictions concerning democracy.

On the other hand, the sudden upheaval may get the message across to the Dutch that their role in the Netherlands Antilles is by no means nearing its end nor getting any cheaper.

It seems only yesterday that all delegates to last year's RTC came home expressing their satisfaction with the outcome of that historic meeting.

The Arubans understandably were jubilant. They got what they wanted most: a special status within the kingdom.

Don Martina, Prime Minister and leader of Curaçao's largest party, said to be relieved. Freed from the paralyzing effects of the decades long strife between Aruba and Curaçao, he was confident that all attention could now be given to managing the sagging economy, in particular of his island Curaçao.

Also the Dutch were elated. Said Holland's Prime Minister Ruud Lubbers: the die is cast. It was indeed euphoria all around.

But when the full text of the RTC resolutions was made available it soon became clear (to those who took the trouble of studying the document) that very little had been achieved. Too much, AR wrote in those days, was left to be decided on at a later stage. The main thrust of the agreements seemed to be to appease the Arubans. Admitted one of the delegates: "it's all cosmetics". Needless to say, the problem with that commodity is that it wears off after a while.

## Ceiling

Also clear at that time was that the only party which could justifiably feel elated, were the Dutch. They had managed to shift the burden of decision-making about

the constitutional future of the Antillean islands to the Antilleans themselves. That and the determination of a date for Aruba's status aparte and independence ten years later, constituted an important step on the road to terminating the relation with the Antilles altogether. The die had indeed been cast! Not only concerning Aruba's future status!

During the twelve months since the RTC realization of the enormous costs of



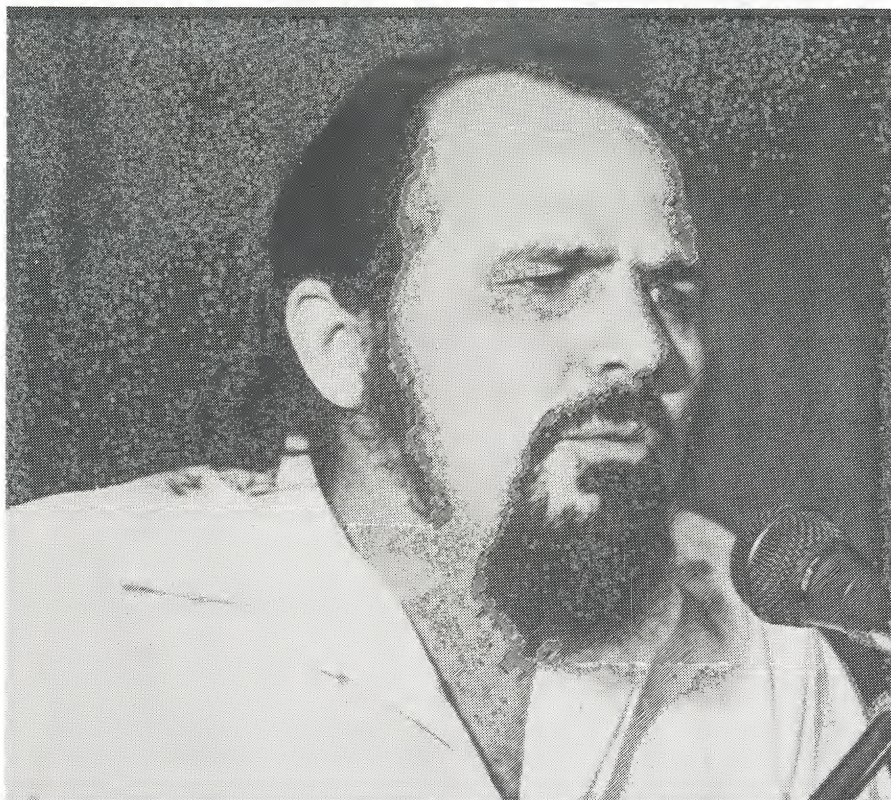
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SITEK'S ERROL COVA

"STOP THE NONSENSE"

breaking up the nation began to dawn. The growing nervousness in this respect only increased when the economy continued to slide downwards. The smaller islands, having no hope of ever becoming self-sufficient, began worrying about becoming even more dependent on Curaçao. A prospect the latter island did not greet with much enthusiasm either.

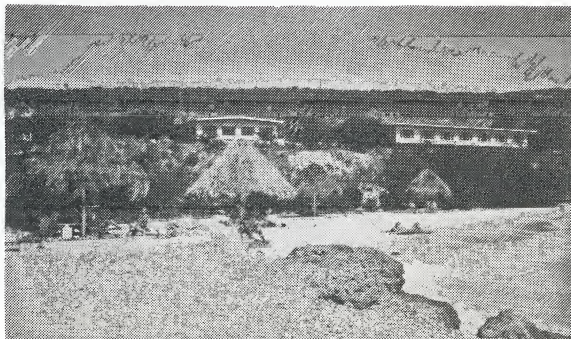
The RTC had in fact foreseen this problem and decided to create a so-called solidarity fund (see insert). The Dutch contribution would consist of a relocation of the means for the development cooperation with observance of the ceiling set. Nowhere does it say that the Dutch will heighten that ceiling with a view to the extra financial burden caused by the intended creation of two constitutional entities: Aruba and the Antilles of the Five. When Holland recently announced that its contribution to the fund would be 10% of the estimated total, the cited uneasiness turned into protest.

**Responsibility**

On the one hand the political powers in the country, including Aruba, decided to join forces in this respect and confront the

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### Article 28 of the RTC-resolutions

The conference concurs that the Netherlands, the Netherlands Antilles and Aruba have an obligation towards the islands with less resources with regard to upholding proper government. These islands may not suffer adverse consequences as a result of Aruba obtaining status aparte. The Netherlands guarantees this through a re-location of the means for the development co-operation with the Netherlands Antilles and Aruba with observance of the ceiling set.

In order to replace the present contribution of the Central Government to the budgets of the islands with less resources a solidarity fund will be established, the means of which will be contributed by the Netherlands Antilles, Aruba and the Netherlands.

As regards this fund, which will be of a public nature, the following has been resolved:

- (1) the distribution of funds will be done by the donor countries in consultation with the receiving island territories Bonaire, Saba, St. Eustatius and as long as required St. Maarten;
- (2) the input into the fund and the participation therein by the donors, the Netherlands, the Netherlands Antilles and Aruba, will be arranged before the status aparte of Aruba is implemented;
- (3) the financial control of the fund will be exercised by the Audit Offices of the donor countries;
- (4) the constitution and functioning of the fund will be regularly evaluated.

The above will be worked out in further consultation with all parties concerned.

Dutch together. A both logical and wise approach.

On the other hand a popular movement decrying the outcome of the RTC altogether was ignited on Curaçao by notably the teacher's union Sitek. The main argument underlying the protest is the correct observation that the people of Curaçao have neither been properly informed nor given a chance to express their opinion concerning its own constitutional future. Thus the protest was first of all directed toward Curaçao's political leaders. At least by implication.

The question may be raised whether the Sitek and other trade-unions which joined them, were wise in taking the lead. It has been observed before that the Chamber of Trade-Unions is taking upon itself too much of a political role. Democracy and the constitutional future of the country might be served in better ways.

It cannot be denied, however, that the message of the protest is long overdue. In particular where it is directed towards the Dutch. Pushing the Antilles on toward a future it cannot possibly hope to survive, at least not with regard to the present standard of living, looks very much like dodging the responsibility three and a half ages of colonialism have laid upon that nation's shoulders.

#### Caution

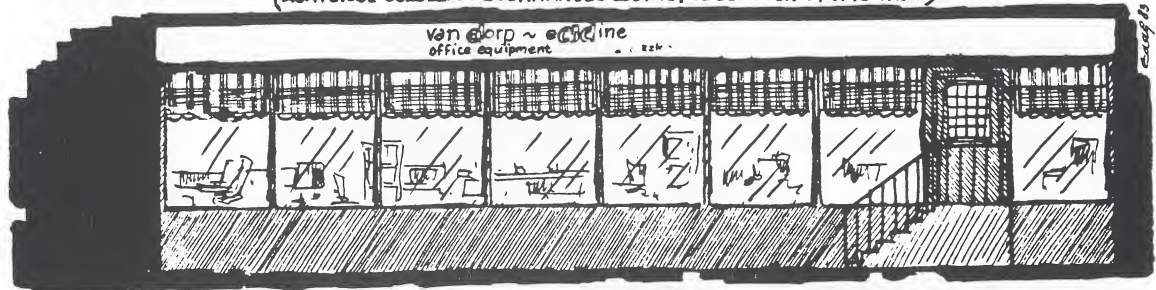
The remaining question is: now what?

The Windward Islands have never made a secret of their intentions. Unless adequate assurances are given about a viable future they will exercise their right of self-determination and opt for direct ties with Holland. Bonaire took a similar position. A recent poll on Curaçao seems to indicate that 80% of the population rejects the idea of independence. Even on Aruba, facing serious financial problems (see following article), the euphoria about the RTC's outcome is toned down.

Beyond any doubt, however, is Holland's intention to rid itself of the Antilles sooner or later. Knowing this all Antillean parties concerned would do wise to think twice before accepting any new proposals which may possibly be forwarded by the Dutch. ■

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## FINANCIAL SITUATION PRECARIOUS

### AUSTERITY MEASURES UNAVOIDABLE

by Henk Timmer

The good news about Aruba's finances is that the year 1984 started with a liquidity in cash and bank accounts of 113 million guilders. More good news is that Aruba's island parliament discussed and approved the 1984 budget during the first weeks of 1984, so quite timely and at least much better than other islands and the Central Government of the Netherlands Antilles. But that is where the good news ends.

The bad news is that Aruba will have a liquidity shortage of approximately 50 million guilders at the end of 1984, if nothing is done in a way of cutting down on expenditures.

Aruba did not have financial problems for some years, but that was only because of the windfall profits made by Lago during the years 1979 - 1982. Almost 400 million guilders in profit tax were received during 1981, 1982 and 1983 or

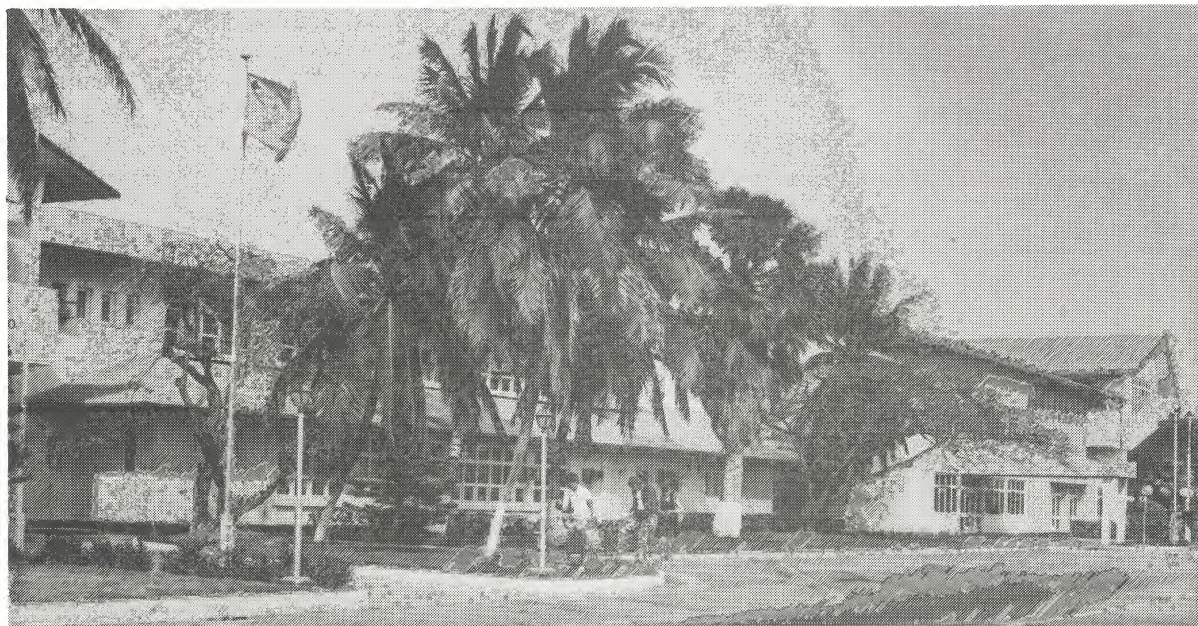
an average of 130 million per year, while normally in the past around 35 million was paid per year. The government budgeted part of the extra profit, but a large extra amount could be spent on expenditures outside the budget. Part of that spending meant paying off debts to banks and to the Central Government, and the 113 million in cash and bank account at the start of 1984 is mainly the balance from the extra Lago profit tax income.

#### Deus ex machina

The administration of Aruba's finances is not up to date. For many years now the actual expenditures and the actual income have not been accounted for in approved annual reports. To get an impression of what the government did with the not-budgeted extra income, one has to listen to radio and t.v., talks by commissioners and the general advisor -

head of the ruling party-Mr. Betico Croes. Also Deco - the economic development office - has been able to give at least some indication of how the income was spent. It is not easy to determine, however, what part of certain expenditures and investments should have been made as part of the budgeted expenditures. One thing that is sure, however, is that already in 1981 Aruba would have been in enormous financial problems, if that extra Lago profit tax would not have appeared as the *deus-ex-machina*, the wonderful and unexpected bonus that saved Aruba from a series of very unpopular measures. Without the extra tax-income Aruba would not have been able to finance the new telephone system on short term. Cost of living adjustments of the salaries and wages of government employees would probably have been impossible and the long overdue reduction in TAV personnel would certainly have had to be effected. The telephone project - 47 million guilders - was financed for the greater part outside the regular budget and from the extra Lago profit-tax. Also DOW - the public works department - went on a buying spree and invested 9 million guilders in new trucks and heavy equipment during the period 1978 - 1982. Regular investments at WEB water and electricity plant accounted for 9 million guilders of expenditures during that same period, while at the same time the reconstruction of many roads and sewerlines (13 million) and renovation of a large number of schools (4,5 million) were executed. The

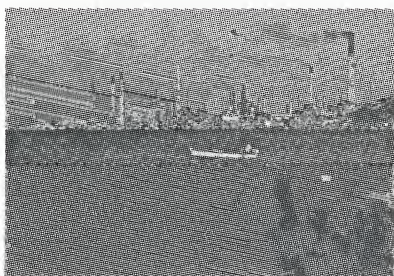
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## ARUBA

island government also spent 3,5 million on renovations and extensions to government buildings in use for their own administration, purchased equipment (5,5 million), extended the Free Zone (1,6 million), paid for various provisions of social-economic character (2,5 million) and repaid 34 million on outstanding loans. Also for projects financed with development aid received from Holland and the European Common Market, certain contributions to the cost are for the account of the island government of Aruba. The island paid 0,9 million to the medical center in San Nicolas, 1,6 million (up to 1983) for the new container harbour, 2,2 million for the public library, 4,3 million for the Bushiri Beach Hotel/hotel school and 5,4 million for various other projects. In total Aruba paid 154 million out of its proper budget for investments such as described above during the years 1978 - 1983.

### Extra

The Lago profit-tax paid for part of these investments, because the Government had adjusted its budget upward for higher than average tax income from the refinery. The amounts actually received were far higher, however, and it is not yet known, how exactly these amounts have been utilized. There are indications that large sums have been spent on losses incurred at WEB - an estimated 23 million has been mentioned - also approximately 20 million seems to have been paid for the import of fresh water to replace production shortages at WEB.

For Aruba's part in Aquanova some 8 million seems to have been spent, while the Aquachem unit investment took care of 13 million guilders. An estimated 2,5 million has been invested in the airport, 5,8 million in Arubus, 9,6 in Aruba Port Authority, 4 million in Aruven and 6 million in the Aruba Development Bank. For WEB the end of necessary investments is not in sight yet. The stand-by unit for generating electricity recently ordered at a cost of 10 million is only part of a long list of investments to be made in the period 1984 - 1996.

For extension of the generating capacity a 46 million investment is projected, but with recent development at Lago this investment may not be needed for some time. Similar amounts, however, are budgeted for replacement of several existing generating units.

### ESTIMATED TAX INCOME OF ARUBA - 1983 - million guilders.

Real Estate Tax (grondbelasting)	1,8	
Personal Use Tax (gebruiksbelasting)	0,3	
Profit Tax (winstbelasting)	80,0	(Lago - 60,0)
Income Tax (inkomstenbelasting)	9,0	
Wage Tax (loonbelasting)	70,0	
Import duties, excise duty, gasoline tax	22,3	
Surcharge on Profit Tax	12,0	
Surcharge on Income and Wage Tax	19,7	
Car License Tax	3,2	
Tourist Tax	3,1	
Casino Tax	3,0	
Various	1,7	
	226,1	
Payments to Central Government	51,1	
Balance estimated tax income Aruba	175,0	

Note: The Islands pay the Central Government 25% of the direct taxation on income and profit and 50% of the income out of import duties and excise taxes. The 22,3 income for Aruba stated above reflects the 50% going to Aruba. The 51,1 million in payments to the Central Government is the 25% of income, profit and wage tax due to the Central Government in 1983, but this concerns tax income for the period July 1981-June 1982.

### CASHFLOW ESTIMATE OF ARUBA - 1984 million guilders

Term deposits at banks and cash reserves January 1, 1984		113,3
<b>Income 1984</b>		
taxes (including 60 million Lago profit tax)	172,9	
other income	16,0	
income from government enterprises (airport, telephone, WEB, DOW)	83,3	
total income 1984	272,2	272,2
<b>Expenditures 1984</b>		
salaries, wages, social security, pension premiums, including subsidized school salaries	146,3	
TAV wages and other welfare payments (onderstand)	17,8	
tax income transfers tot Central Government - nett.	32,7	
interest and repayments on loans	12,4	
support of government enterprises	30,1	
unforeseen WEB expenses on boilers etc.	22,0	
unforeseen purchase of WEB generator	10,0	
various other operating expenses	122,0	
investments - normal program	40,4	
total expenditures 1984	433,7	(433,7)
Required expenditure cuts or required financing with loans		48,2

Note: tax income estimate has not yet been adjusted to lower tax income expectations.

### Gap

The reduced tax income for 1984 will of course mean that adjustments in the 1984 budget will be necessary. Capital expenses will have to be reduced to a minimum, and the general expenses will also have to be trimmed to a level where the island government will be able to finance the remaining deficit. Aruba's nett income from taxes for the first half of 1984 was originally estimated at 72 mil-

port, telephone company and WEB was estimated at 43 million, a total income of 115 million. This estimate will probably have to be adjusted down because of the negative economic developments. On the expense side the budget for 1984 shows for the first 6 months of 1984: salaries/wages and social benefits for government and education 73 million guilders. ■

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# WHERE QUALITY COUNTS

by Hubert Linkels

Today's emphasis in Bonaire is on improving the quality of life. Both for visitors and locals. Mr. Niki Tromp, head of the Bonaire Tourist Bureau, reports a sweeping programme for enhancing the tourist facilities. The island's hotel and restaurant facilities, its villas, its programmes for scuba divers and bird-watchers and its roads, all are being improved. Even the single casino on the island is being completely re-equipped.

But the best news, no doubt, is the recent announcement of the Dutch government that it has agreed to the Island Government's request for Naf.8 million in order to bring the drinking water supply on par. Good news indeed for the local population, which looking at the brownish liquid coming out of their taps, have often wondered why

their island is being promoted abroad as having "the purest water in the world". What may be pure enjoyment to scuba divers does not lessen one's thirst.

## Hotels

The most dramatic change is at the Bonaire Beach Hotel, formerly the Hotel Bonaire. The London based Caledonian Hotel Management, which took over November last, has embarked on an extensive programme of upgrading the facilities. Initially 57 of the 138 rooms will be refurbished and redecorated. Extensive new landscaping is scheduled for the 12-acre property, while its tennis courts will be re-surfaced and a volleyball court added. The beach will be widened and the kitchen facilities will be enlarged for both the redesigned main dining room and the Beach Hut.


The Bonaire Scuba Center, which handles watersports at the hotel, has

arranged for a sailing yacht, the Lady Jo-Ma, to be available for sails. Windsurfers, sunfish and other craft are also available. The Center has a fleet of four dive boats. For underwater photographers, new facilities on the premises permit immediate processing of color film.


The popular Flamingo Beach Hotel, which has been improving its property steadily during the past years, recently installed its own desalination equipment in order to safe-guard its guests from the discomforts caused by the failing public waterplant (see below). Its scuba facility, the Dive Bonaire, added a 31-foot diesel powered speed monohull to its fleet which now numbers 7 boats and may be considered the largest for any individual dive resort in the Caribbean.

Habitat, which under the direction of Captain Don acquired international fame with scuba divers, also increased its fleet. The new 30-foot monohull permits rapid access to more distant dive sites. ▶

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waterplant

## BONAIRE

It should be observed that many of Bonaire's 40-plus designated dive locations lie within 15 minutes from the hotels. However, for divers who have visited the island several times, the more remote locations along the 25-mile reef are now likewise within easy reach with these new speed boats.

### Construction

Anticipating a further growth of the tourism industry on the island construction of apartments and condominiums is under way on several locations. The furthest advanced is the Golden Anchor Club at the Bonaire Marina. The first ten 2-story apartment units, each with its own slip, have been sold and are being occupied. A 2 1/2 million dollar contract has been signed for work to begin in May on 64 additional units.

### Guides

Two recent publications also add to the quality of service the island offers its visitors. A full color guide to Bonaire's

Marine Park was published by the Netherlands Antilles National Park Foundation under sponsorship of the World Wildlife Fund of the Netherlands. The same foundation also published a "Field Guide to Washington-Slagbaai National Park, Bonaire". This should not only serve bird watchers interested in the 170 varieties which have been identified on the island well, but also naturalists and visitors who simply wish to explore the 13,500 acre preserve.

### Water plant

These efforts to upgrade the touristic product, however, were recently seriously threatened by regular breakdowns of the island's watersupply. Not only did the waterplant appear to be in bad shape, due apparently to a neglect of maintenance, but also the distribution system was beginning to malfunction.

In order to guarantee a minimum supply during the day the government was forced to shut down the water distribution during dark hours. The village of Rincon had to

resort entirely to the use of its natural wells.

It should be observed that only ten years ago the Dutch Government provided close to 3.5 million (NAf) to improve and extend the existing waterplant. The local government, already facing a substantial yearly deficit, had no other option than once more turning to the Dutch for financial assistance. This, it was announced earlier this year, has been granted. The project, which involves extensive new equipment for the plant as well as a renewal and extension of the distribution system, will be executed in three stages. Total costs NAf. 36 million.

The first stage already well under way, the Bonaireans may soon be able to agree through drinking rather than diving experience that their island has indeed the purest water one can ask for in this world. ■



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# CURACAO HARBOUR OPEN FOR BUSINESS

## *NEW CONTAINER TERMINAL TO BEGIN FULL OPERATION LATER THIS YEAR*

**Ranking among the world's busiest ports, Curacao's harbour is today also one of the best organized. In recent years a sweeping reorganization of its structure, services and facilities was undertaken with a view to the latest requirements in cargo and passenger handling. A brand new and sophisticated container terminal will be in full operation later this year. Already having one of the largest drydocks in the Western Hemisphere, the island's port may be considered the best equipped in this part of the world.**

The thorough overhaul was deemed necessary to secure this vital source of the island's income for the future. In proportion to the economy, it was a gigantic effort costing close to Naf.100 million. Generous financial aid from Holland, as well as expert advice from the harbour of Rotterdam, did much to achieve the intended goal. The fact that the project was

embarked upon and executed during a time of world recession, reflects favourably on the ability of Curacao's government for long term planning.

### **Relocation**

Aware of the rapid development in container transport and the significance of cruise tourism for the island's economy,

the local government began looking around as early as 1976 for the best available advice with a view to upgrading the entire harbour's operations. This was found with Rotterdam's Municipal Port Enterprises.

In 1977, a report was presented to the Curacao officials recommending the relocation of several port activities, the construction of a cruise and container terminal and a complete new organisational setup. All the recommendations were accepted and in due time executed. The Curacao Port Authorities (CPA) was established to take charge of overall port management. Stevedore and transport activities are looked after by the Curacao Port Services (CPS). Both are limited liability companies. Relocation of activities has resulted in separate quays for cruise shipping, separate berths for tug-boats, a separate harbour for breakbulk cargo and an almost completed fully equipped container terminal.

### **Cruise Terminal**

Taking full advantage of the spectacular approach to the island—ships enter by way of the Santa Anna Bay lined with 17th



century houses decorated with old Dutch gables — berths for cruise-ships were reserved right there, in the heart of town. Just over a year ago, a passenger terminal providing all necessary facilities to embarking or disembarking passengers was officially inaugurated. Covering an area of 8020 sq. feet, the terminal contains restrooms, customs and immigration offices, information desks, luggage lockers, telephone and telex facilities etc.

During 1983, several cruise lines began using Curacao as a baseport. The construction of the new passenger terminal, obviously, was instrumental in promoting this development. The handling of

many hundreds of passengers leaving ship to fly home and of the same numbers arriving for a cruise has gone quite smoothly due to close co-operation between the airport authorities, the tourism officials and the local agencies in charge.

The next step in placing Curacao more firmly on the map of tourism and particularly cruise tourism is the full-scale restoration of the oldest part of town (Otrabanda), the architecture of which is unique in the Caribbean.

**Container Terminal**

During 1981, a start was made with the construction of the earlier mentioned con-

tainer terminal, which is now nearing completion. This terminal will offer ships 500 metres quay length and 2 Ro/Ro berths of 25 metres each with a depth alongside of 40 feet. On the terminal area of approximately 250,000 acres, sufficient space is planned and modern repair and maintenance facilities will be available. A modern gantry crane will handle 30 TEU's per hour in order to dispatch ships as fast as possible.

Curacao's harbour presently handles 25,000 TEU moves a year, whereas the new terminal is designed for up to 50,000 moves per year with possibilities for further extension. Besides serving local demand, the terminal is intended to develop a transshipment function, in particular for traffic to and from South American ports. The accomodation of the nearby continent's ports and shipping companies to container transport is expected to develop slowly because of financial and social reasons. That should increase the demand for cheap transit ports like the one now under construction in Curacao and the smaller but likewise highly efficient terminal recently completed in Aruba. It should be observed that competition between these two terminals will have to be in the realm of service rather than prices.

**Drydock**

In addition to these developments the good news is that the harbour's great asset, the Curacao Drydock (CDM), is back in business. When the recession hit the ship repairing business, CDM experienced great problems. In spite of its major advantages — first class facilities, skilled work force and geographical location in an otherwise poorly supplied ship repairing region — the yard, whose 'beds' are among the world's largest, suffered the consequences of being considered highly priced.

This led to substantial losses during the past two years and has caused a thorough re-organization of the yard and the acceptance of a new pricing policy made possible by the willingness of CDM's labour force to forego an average of 23% in earnings. As a result, business is presently picking up satisfactorily and CDM might well be out of the red before the end of 1985. ■

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# ANTILLES' BUSIEST AIRPORT ALSO EEC'S BIGGEST PROJECT

Although named after a great queen, there is decidedly nothing majestic about St. Maarten's *Juliana* airport. In relation to the number of passengers filing through its undersized, inefficient, hot and uncomfortable terminal it must be called a poor operation. Which is not to say that arriving vacationers are not immediately charmed by the *laissez faire* atmosphere. It is after all that ambiance they are in search of. And so popular has St. Maarten become that close to 1 million tourists are expected to invade the small island (12,000 inhabitants) this year. But the rapid and rather unforeseen increase of visitors has made the reconstruction

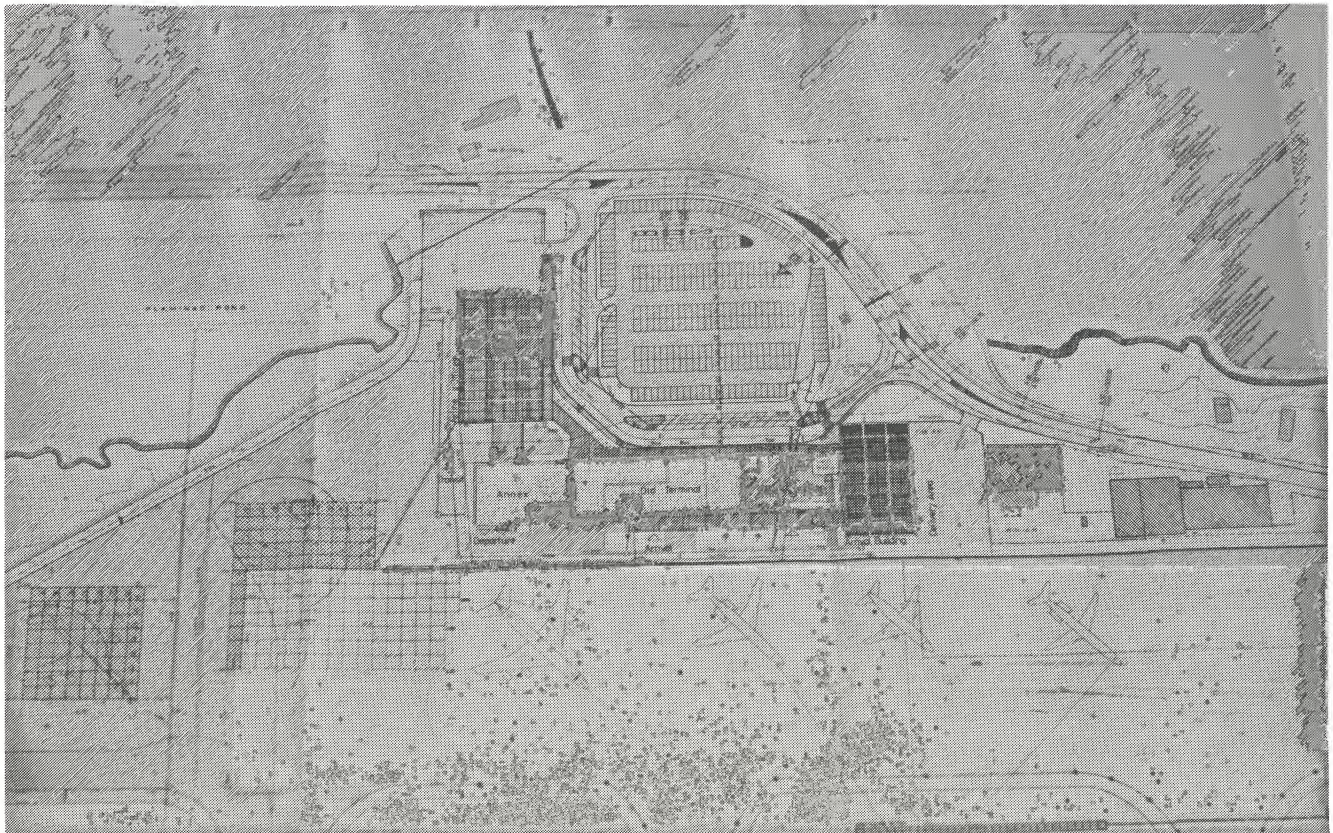
and updating of the airport's facilities a - some say belated - must.

Next year this time arriving or departing from St. Maarten will be a very different story from what it is today. But no fear: the modernization of the airport, presently underway, will only add to that unique relaxing mood St. Maarten offers the traveller.

The construction activities, which started late 1983, are aimed at the implementation of a first phase of a rather impressive master plan. As can be learned from the design (see underneath) a new arrival hall as well as a new departure ter-

terminal will be added to the existing building. Served daily by at least 8 airlines, among which American Airlines, Eastern, ALM and PANAM, flying in thousands of passengers, the present facilities are by no means sufficient to cope at peak hours. Office accommodation for the airline's personnel is also far below par. The present terminal will consequently be reconstructed to house those offices. The recently re-decorated and already highly popular restaurant will be moved from the first floor to spacier quarters on the ground floor.

On the tarmac two new platforms will be constructed to accommodate the parking of the larger type of aircraft e.g. the DC-

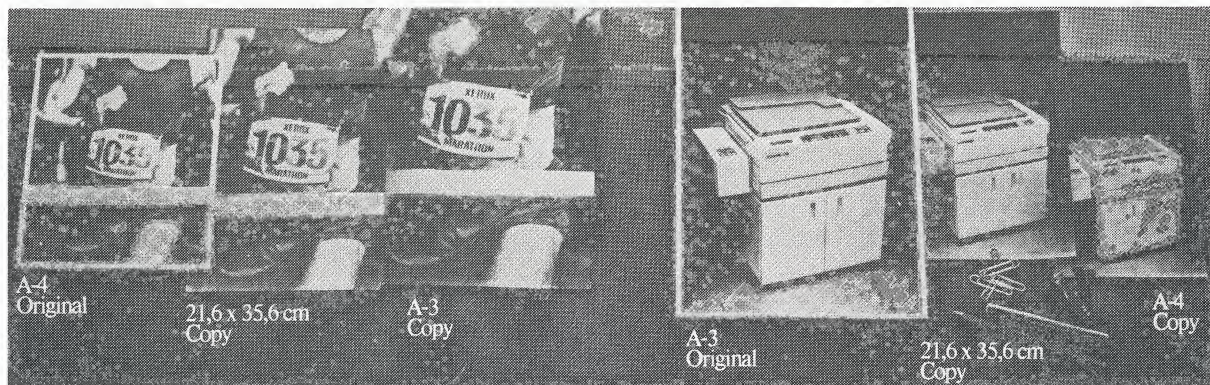




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## WINDWARD ISLANDS

10 and Boeing-727. Small private planes will soon have a brand new general aviation apron at their disposal. A separate building will be erected for the handling of freight.

This sweeping reconstruction of the airport facilities has in turn necessitated redesigning the infrastructure around Juliana airport. Most spectacular, no doubt, is the new road leading through Flamingo Pond to the hotels on the West side of the island. As can be seen from the photograph printed alongside this article, this part of the project is already well advanced.

The total costs of the project which is directed by Flughafen Frankfurt Air Consult and executed by Neth. Habor Works Company N.A., amount to NAF. 19,730,679.-. This relatively large sum of money - taking into account the size of the island - is being provided by the Central Government ( 5.4 million) and the European Economic Community ( 14.3 million). The latter's contribution consists of ECU 1.3 million à fond perdu and ECU 7.2 million as a loan repayable in thirty years as from September 15, 1993. It should be observed that this involvement makes it the largest project of the European Community in the Netherlands Antilles. It should also be noted that this kind of EEC participation is out of the ordinary. Said EEC's Cornelli ( Brussels) at the official start of the project on St. Maarten Day, November 11, 1983: ' the EEC contribution to the financing of this project is - especially when it is calculated per capita of a population which certainly does not belong to the poorest in the



world - extraordinarily high'. Although, according to Mr. C. Cornelli, co-funding of such infrastructural projects is not fully in line with Brussels' general guidelines, in the case of the Netherlands Antilles this involvement seems to be quite justified. In this respect he stressed the fact that other EEC projects in the Antilles have been satisfactorily executed, well used and well maintained. 'A fact', he said, 'that unfortunately can not be stated in all countries'.

The EEC's involvement in the project is not limited to the mere financial aspect. Says Mr. O.C. Mérien of the Antillean

Department of Development Co-operation, who co-ordinates all EEC projects in the country: ' concert with the EEC delegation is excellent'. Mr. Mérien visits the project every two weeks, often together with a member of the aforementioned delegation. 'This practice', he says, ' enables us to speed up the process of decision-making, if any problems arise.' As a result the project is developing on schedule, which implies that the first and most important phase should be completed by May 9, 1985. 'That', Mr. Mérien adds, 'is none too early'.

Not only has tourism on the island increased beyond any expectation and is it still growing, St. Maarten also functions as an air-traffic junction both for passengers and freight in the Eastern Caribbean. This fact apparently was decisive for the EEC to approve the project. Mr. Cornelli explicitly pointed out that 'this project will and should be for the benefit of neighbouring islands.' Mentioning Saba and St. Eustatius in particular he could have added the names of several other islands as well. It should also not be forgotten that St. Maarten is part French. An aspect which will certainly have carried weight in Brussels' decision making.

Already the busiest airport in the Netherlands Antilles, St. Maarten is expected to surpass Puerto Rico in the near future. This prognosis may indicate that the upgrading of Juliana airport is certainly not a luxury. ■

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At mid March 1984 the level of foreign exchange showed a decline of f. 11 million compared with the end of 1983. On an annual basis the deficit amounted to about f. 40 million. Reducing income from tourism, especially in Curaçao, accounted for most of this result. The balance of payments for 1983 recorded a deficit of f. 47 million. Apart from offshore services all the other main sectors showed a fall in income from abroad. Earnings from tourism decreased by f. 200 million or 40%. Also transportation and oil processing recorded substantial reductions in foreign exchange earnings.

Due to large tax payments by the so-called offshore companies, this sector increased its foreign exchange contribution by f. 143 million or 35%. Both the Shell refinery on Curaçao and the Exxon refinery on Aruba have been facing serious difficulties in getting crude oil from Venezuela on the same favourable terms as in the past. Venezuela has reduced the export of crude oil as a result of the OPEC agreement and has also increased the price after the existing contracts with both refineries matured. The prime minister together with a government delegation went to the U.S.A. to discuss the continued existence of the Exxon refinery.

#### Foreign Reserves.

The month of January recorded a loss of foreign exchange of f. 16 million, which was compensated by a growth in February to an amount of f. 15 million. The first half of March showed a decrease of f. 10 million, resulting in a decline in foreign reserves of f. 11 million since the end of 1983 to a level of f. 333 million, held by the Central Bank and the private deposit banks. This level is about f. 40 million less than compared with a year ago.

Decreasing foreign exchange earnings from tourism, especially in Curaçao which still has not recovered from the blow dealt by the Bolivar devaluation, accounted for most of this deficit. Not only hotels, but also the trade sector is complaining about a decline in sales. The forecasts for 1984 are not encouraging; a further fall of reserves is almost certain, in particular when Lago Aruba will only transfer f. 67 million for profit tax compared with f. 132 million last year.

Still the level of reserves is relatively high. The total amount, including gold, equals almost three months of payments for merchandise imports. It is important for a widely open economy to maintain such a level, which can be achieved by

controlling the creation of money in particular for public sector deficits.

#### Balance of Payments

The Central Bank released the external cash flow figures for 1983. Because of the widely open character of the economy foreign exchange revenues may be used to illustrate the development of economic activities (table 1). These indications suggest that several important sectors declined sharply in 1983. Tourism was adversely affected by a decrease in foreign real income. In addition Curaçao had to bear severe effects of an almost complete cessation of tourism from Vene-

zuela. Gross revenues from tourism in Curaçao fell by f. 142 million to f. 137 million during 1983, resulting for the first time in a negative outcome of f. 12 million. This means that this activity is no longer a net earner of foreign exchange; during 1983 Curaçao spent f. 149 million on tourism abroad, but only received f. 137 million from foreigners temporarily staying on the island.

This negative effect was partly mitigated by a tremendous increase in revenues from the offshore financial sector, which recorded a growth of f. 143 million or 35% to f. 557 million during 1983. This total amount consisted of f. 337 million paid for profit taxes and f. 220 million of operational expenditures which had to be transferred from abroad to settle local bills and personnel expenses. In 1982 these items amounted to f. 220 million and f. 129 million respectively. Most of the increase occurred in the last quarter of 1983 when f. 130 million of profit taxes and f. 65 million of operational expenditures were recorded. The first amount included high amounts of back log taxes whereas the last amount was affected by additional wage tax payments on certain personnel expenses.

Earnings from oil processing were determined mostly by the amount of profit taxes paid by the refineries, in particular Lago on Aruba, which paid f. 132 million in 1983 against f. 154 million in the previous year. The transportation sector includes mostly the operations of the Curaçao Dry Dock, of the oil storage and transshipment facilities, revenues from harbor and port traffic as well as services rendered by the national airline ALM.

Growth in this sector was hampered by the international recession. ▶

table 1. Foreign exchange earnings; f million.

	1983	1982	change	%
tourism	572	776	- 204	- 26
transportation	309	392	- 83	- 21
oil processing	444	511	- 67	- 13
offshore sector	557	414	143	+ 35
other earnings	363	420	- 57	- 14
Total earnings	2245	2513	- 268	- 11
merchandise imports	1499	1654	155	+ 9
other current payments	744	690	- 54	- 8
net capital outflow	49	79	30	+ 38
change foreign reserves	- 47	90	- 137	- 152

### Development Bank.

The development bank of the Netherlands Antilles published its annual report for 1983, calling that period a year of uncertainties and declining activity. It mentioned some remedies and courses of action. First, an improved coordination between the Central Government and the island governments of Curaçao and Aruba regarding public finance. Secondly, public spending should be reduced as a matter of urgency in terms of wages, making room for development financing and temporary support for ailing enterprises. Thirdly, there must be a strong basis for monetary policy under the auspices of a strong Central bank. Fourthly, wage reductions also in the private sector should be obtained, because present cost levels in the main economic sectors are far too high by international standards and thus jeopardize the country's competitive edge.

At the end of 1983 116 projects had been handled by the Bank, 28 of which were approved to an amount of f. 5,6 million. The Bank is making a contribution to a diversification of the national economy

in proportion to the distribution of GDP among the economic sectors. The intention is to diversify in agriculture, manufacturing and to a certain extent tourism. Amongst all the criteria taken into account in the appraisal of the project proposals the creation of employment has certainly been one of great importance. Of the 28 projects which were approved, two projects were subsequently withdrawn by the promoters. On the basis of the 26 remaining projects the employment creation numbered 100 new jobs, resulting in an average investment of f. 50,000 per job created.

The bank has an equity capital of f. 6.5 million. At the end of 1983 an amount of f. 2.1 million had been used as loans for projects approved. The remaining amount had been invested in bank deposits and government bonds.

### Oil processing

Prime Minister Don Martina went to the U.S.A. to visit the head office of the oil company Exxon. The subject to be discussed appeared to be the continued existence of the Lago oil refinery in Aruba. A closing of this refinery, which had been

mentioned by the local press as a possibility, might have serious effects on the financial position and the employment situation of Aruba. About a quarter of Aruba's domestic income and about 3000 people depend directly or indirectly on the operations of the oil refinery.

Aruba is not the only island having problems with oil processing. The Shell refinery in Curaçao also experienced difficulties and due to the same cause. In view of an OPEC-agreement Venezuela has reduced the export of crude oil and also increased the prices after the contracts matured. The contracts offered a favourable price below the international market price, which resulted in a positive margin.

The future of the two refineries is still uncertain. They lack both a significant natural market and an own supply of crude and face the excess refining capacity on a worldwide basis. Besides, the demand from the USA for oil products declined due to the ever increasing supply of Alaska-oil.

Both refineries plan continued rationalization programs, but new investments

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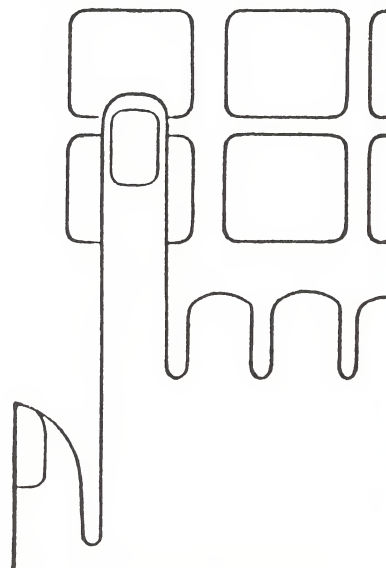
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## FINANCE

will only be made after an agreement has been reached about the price and the supply by Venezuela. Such an agreement has not materialized as yet.

### Offshore financial sector

Prospects for this sector continued to be clouded by the uncertainty regarding the tax treaty with the United States. This treaty formally expired at the end of June 1980 and at the request of the United States has been renegotiated.

A major stumbling block in the renegotiation of the U.S. -Antilles tax treaty has been the United States' desire to include exchange of information provisions in the renegotiated treaty and a corresponding reluctance to do so on the part of the Antillean government.

The Netherlands Antilles has decided to make major concessions clearing the way for the conclusion of a Heads of Agreement. It has agreed not only to modify its bank secrecy and share laws, but also to accept extensive policing and enforcement provisions that will result in the farthest-reaching and most effective Exchange of Information provision ever contained in a U.S. tax treaty.

However, there seems to be no progress. Two top negotiators left the USA negotiating team, hampering further negotiations. As a consequence the present treaty will continue to be valid anyhow for 1985 and 1986.

The repealing of the withholding tax still looms ahead. The U.S. Senate finance committee approved a phasing out of the 30% withholding tax on interest paid to foreigners. Current U.S. law requires American companies to issue bonds through subsidiaries in the Netherlands Antilles, if they want bond buyers to have tax-exempt status. Under the proposal, the 30% tax would be cut to 5% in 1984. It would then be reduced by one percent each year thereafter until being eliminated on July 1, 1988. The U.S. Treasury has strongly supported repeal of the tax, in part because it would encourage foreign investors to buy U.S. debt securities directly in America. Such a move would help transfer much of the international dollar bond market to New York. Current issues amount to \$ 10 billion a year in \$ nominated bonds which now are marketed primarily in Europe.

The proposal still has to be approved by the Senate and the House of Representatives in the U.S.A. ■

table 2. Condensed balance sheet Central Bank; f million

end of	March '84	February '84	January '84	December '83
<b>assets</b>				
gold stock	41.4	41.4	41.4	41.4
foreign reserves	303.4	282.7	272.7	295.9
loans to:				
— fed. government	104.0	98.8	106.0	98.9
— island government	—	—	—	19.6
— banks	1.0	1.3	—	0.0
— others	1.0	1.0	1.0	1.0
sundry assets	6.3	6.1	6.0	6.0
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>457.1</b>	<b>431.3</b>	<b>427.1</b>	<b>462.8</b>
<b>liabilities</b>				
banknotes	173.8	174.1	169.9	178.8
deposits held by:				
— tax collector	6.5	8.6	6.8	6.0
— island government	84.6	89.1	97.6	112.5
— banks	59.8	19.0	30.0	35.9
— development projects	33.0	43.1	28.9	38.2
— other residents	20.9	20.6	20.2	17.6
— non-residents	0.7	0.6	0.6	0.6
money in custody	2.1	2.1	2.1	2.1
sundry liabilities	11.9	10.3	7.2	7.3
Capital and reserves	63.8	63.8	63.8	63.8
	<b>457.1</b>	<b>431.3</b>	<b>427.1</b>	<b>462.8</b>
	<b>63.8</b>	<b>63.8</b>	<b>63.8</b>	<b>63.8</b>



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## AFTER A JOB WELL DONE

## FAREWELL TO JIM WILSON

## BUT HOPEFULLY NOT TO SHELL

Jim Wilson, Shell's outgoing general manager, comes straight to the point. "We faced two problems and solved one. What was up to us, we did". Every word in that brief observation is correct. So is the implication. When on April 4 a new labour agreement was signed permitting a substantial cut-back in the refinery's

of the word a regular appointment. In fact he had completed his career with the company and was due to retire. But "I wanted to see if anything could be done. I considered the job a professional challenge". What he found was far from encouraging. The year 1982, he says, was 'calamitous'. Corporate losses amounted to US\$ 88

long and difficult time "there was an underlying awareness of fair play". Never did he experience anything nasty in a personal way.

Smiling he adds: "maybe there is an advantage in being small. People don't get rough with an undersized man". It seems closer to the truth that Wilson's approach invites common sense to prevail. In the end Shell's workers accepted the proposed austerity programme with a ratio of 4 to 1!

In 1983 operating costs were already brought back to US\$ 166 million. "This trend will continue in the current year" says Wilson "as several cost-saving measures we have now agreed upon still have to materialize". He feels confident about the projected figure of US\$ 155 million for 1984.

There is no reason, however, to shout victory. The refinery's survival, so vital to the island's economy, is by no means a foregone conclusion. Wilson elaborates: in the early seventies the supply of crudes was still quite diversified. Over 30% was coming from Nigeria. After the '73 oil crisis that country nationalized its oil industry and refining their crude no longer yielded a profit. In the following years Shell-Curacao handled fair quantities of Iranian and Mexican crudes. The main supplier all through, however, was Venezuela.

Last year—after the Mexican devaluation and the steep rise in transport costs—Mr. Wilson was forced to draw the only logical conclusion: to keep our competitive edge there is no alternative but Venezuela".

At that point in time the company was negotiating with MARAVEN about processing medium heavy crude. Shell was



operating expenses, it could fairly be said that all parties concerned, including the Government, had done their part. What could not be said is that Shell's future on the island is once more secured. The other problem, the issue of guaranteed and adequate supply of crudes, is as yet unresolved. A veritable sword of Damocles, the removal of which is in the hands of decision-makers abroad, notably in Caracas, Venezuela. In the long run, Wilson has no doubts about the viability of Shell-Curacao but the question is "whether we will survive the short term".

When Wilson was appointed general manager of Shell Curacao a good two years ago, it was not in the real sense

million. The operating expenses, he explains, had increased faster than the consumer price index figure. In that disastrous year they reached an all time high of US\$ 195 million (up from US\$ 73 million in 1974)!

Recourse had to be taken to trimming down the company. Not an easy task, nor a pleasant one. Long and often difficult negotiations with the trade-union evolved. Government involvement became necessary. Wilson has great esteem for the 'mature' manner in which all parties concerned acted. All through that



willing to invest US\$ 2 million for that purpose. All estimates indicated that even on the basis of the notified price (up till last year Shell received Venezuelan crude under contract at a special price) production would be profitable. That is if the supply would amount to 180,000 barrels per day. It should be observed that Shell-Curacao's economic optimum lies at a through-put of approximately 200,000 barrels a day. The abovementioned supply, together with 30,000 barrels Mexican crude, would thus keep the refinery nicely in business.

Shell did invest the US\$ 2 million. But Maraven could not deliver. Tied down by the OPEC agreements and a serious economic recession at home with all their supplies sold, the Venezuelans could not go beyond 130,000 barrels.

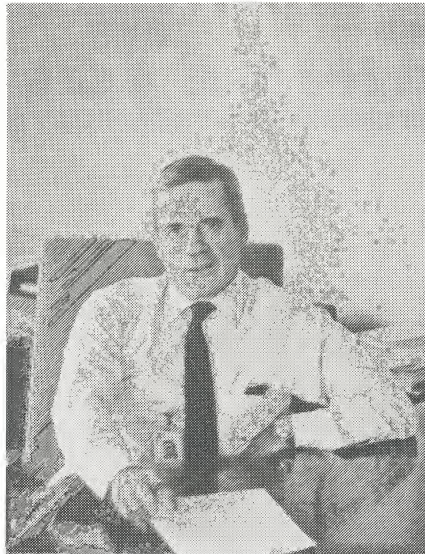
Comments Wilson: "I understand their position. But those 50,000 barrels make all the difference. They (the Venezuelans) assure us that in the long run they will deliver. But the question is whether we will still be in business by then".

Closer links with Venezuela would certainly help. Last year negotiations about participation of MARAVEN in Shell-Curacao were well under way. Such a partnership would secure the supply-line and guarantee the intake. But the present economic situation in Venezuela does not permit large investments abroad.

Consequently Shell has no intention of exerting pressure to continue the talks for the time being. "Eventually", says Wilson "such participation is a must".

"For the present", he continues, "it is essential that a decision about long term supplies is taken this year". A matter which regards Aruba's Lago (See following article) as much as Shell.

The underlying question here is whether two refineries so close to each other, just off the mainland and totally dependent on Venezuelan crude, can or even should both continue their operations. Mr. Wilson recently conducted five different studies looking for feasible alternatives. He is convinced it cannot be done. His refinery can not be trimmed any further. The implied conclusion is obvious. This shifts the weight of the matter



first of all to Caracas. No longer are Shell's problems with Venezuelan (nor those of Lago) simply of a commercial nature.

What price the companies would have to pay in the future is not the only issue anymore. The question of supplies is also a political one. In particular as it is reported from Venezuela that the Government of Jaime Lusinchi is increasingly tightening its hold on the oil industry. AR moreover learned that the Venezuelans have recently conducted serious research into the economic options of both Aruba and Curacao.

The actual decision whether to continue operations is of course taken by the company's shareholders. On this aspect Wilson has no comments. All he can say is that both London and Venezuela were greatly impressed by the new labour-agreement and in particular by the positive attitude of all parties involved in its conclusion.

Although careful not to sound too optimistic, Mr. Wilson is willing to express his personal confidence in Shell-Curacao's future. He concedes that the company is presently holding its horses with regard to new investments. "We are in the process of buying new parts for approximately US\$ 20 million, but all other projects are in fact frozen". But in general he says "I am not pessimistic. On the contrary". His judgement of viability in the long run, rings hope for Curacao. It may after all be expected that the opinion of the man who solved Shell Curacao's problem number one will carry weight with those in Caracas (and London) who will decide concerning number two. ■

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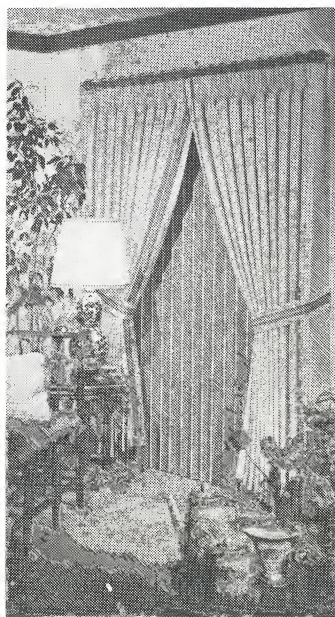
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# VENEZUELA HOLDS KEY TO LAGO'S FUTURE

by Henk Timmer

**The large Exxon refinery, now almost 60 years a strong pillar of the Aruban economy is facing a serious supply problem of the type of crude it has been refining all these years. This supply problem is causing a drastic change in the profitability outlook for Lago. A refinery geared to a daily output of 300,000 barrels can simply not be operated profitably refining only 180,000 barrels per day. The supply shortage is caused by measures taken by OPEC countries and as one of the OPEC member countries Venezuela has cut down its supply of crude to the Lago refinery in Aruba.**

Lago, once the biggest refinery in the world, although not situated in a production country, nor located in a country with a large consumption of oil products, still has been able to maintain its position on the market remarkably well during the years. With its long term supply agreements, first with Exxon's affiliate Creole Petroleum and later with the Venezuelan owned production companies, Lago could get all the heavy crude it needed to operate profitably.

In 1975 this situation changed and during the three subsequent years Lago could not get sufficient crude from Venezuela. Short term contracts replaced long term agreements and insufficient quantities made 1975 - 1978 unprofitable years for the refinery. As a result no major investments were made at Lago during those meager years.

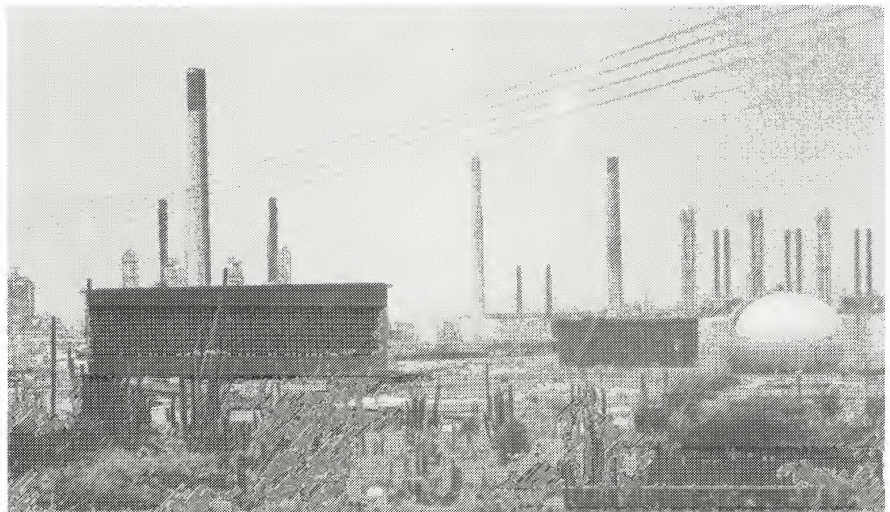
In 1978 Lago succeeded to make a new supply agreement with Venezuela and received sufficient crude to make 1978 - 1983 very good years with not only profits for Lago, but also very high tax income for Aruba and the Central Government. Exxon reinvested the major part of these profits in the Lago refinery. Approximately \$ 150,000,000.-- was invested in safety and other efficiency improvements and \$ 450,000,000.-- was earmarked for maintenance and a utilities modernization programme. In 1982 new investment plans were studied by Exxon but execution of these plans came to a standstill when suddenly in the fall of 1983 it appeared that Venezuela had decided to reduce the supply of crude to only 180,000 barrels a day.

## Crystal clear

When extensive discussions with the Venezuelan production companies did

not show much promise for a speedy return to previous supply levels, Exxon had no other choice than to streamline its Aruba refinery and downsize the operation for the time-being to 60% of the normal production level. This way losses would still be unavoidable, but would at least be minimized.

After many weeks of rumors about a possible closing of the refinery, representatives of both the Central Government and the Aruba Island Government went to Coral Gables in Florida, in order to hear from highlevel Exxon executives



what the future outlook of Lago would be. A lot of information was given during these meetings, and one thing became crystal clear: Venezuela holds the key to the future of Lago.

The refinery is up-to-date and capable of producing to the full capacity of 300,000 barrels per day, Exxon can sell Lago's finished product without any doubt, but Lago can only produce and sell

economically if Venezuela supplies the heavy crude needed as feedstock of the Aruba refinery at a market oriented price.

Lago is a modern efficient refinery but its production facilities are geared to processing the heavy crude which is plentifully present in Venezuela's soil. The refinery is not comparable to the ultra-modern "flexicoker" type refinery, like the one Exxon is now building in Rotterdam. The flexicoker is the last word in refineries, extremely versatile, producing a variety of highest grade products, but requiring billions in investment capital. Lago's refining installations cannot be compared to these ultra-modern refineries, but is certainly not obsolete, as has been said in some of the many rumors about Lago's future.

The refinery is modern in all respects, in good state of repairs, but limited to the processing of heavy crude. Venezuela has always been the supplier of that type of crude and Lago does not have many alternative supply sources. Mexico presently supplies small quantities, but the maximum Lago can get from that source is 15,000 to 20,000 barrels per day.

## No choice

With that much dependency on supplier Venezuela, Lago's future is very

much in the hands of that good neighbour. As a member of Opec, however, Venezuela has agreed to a limited production. The demand for oil in the world has decreased substantially during the period 1973 - 1983. The first oil price explosion in 1973 triggered the activities directed towards developing alternative sources of energy and forced consumers to reduce the use of oil and oil products. The second major price increase (1979) caused a

worldwide recession and as a result lower oil consumption everywhere.

The price has been adjusted downward somewhat in order to keep the demand at reasonable levels, but without the drastic reduction in production levels, the market price would have fallen much more. The OPEC countries agreed to reduce their output in order to bring world oil production down from 22 to 17 million barrels per day. Each country affiliated with OPEC had to carry its share of the output reduction and Venezuela agreed to reduce its production from 2.2 to 1.6 million barrels per day.

**Correcting mistakes**

But Venezuela has an extremely high national debt in US dollars and consequently needs all the foreign exchange it can generate from selling crude and oil products in order to meet its obligations.

The annual foreign exchange income of Venezuela amounts to approximately 18 billion US dollars, almost completely a result of oil exports. The foreign debt is twice the annual foreign exchange income and would not be insurmountable, were it not that Venezuela is importing over 70% of its food and has been accustomed to large imports of goods of all kinds. The austerity programme presently being executed by Venezuela's new president Jaime Lusinchi, will have to correct many of the mistakes made in the past. For the present Venezuela needs all the dollars it can get within the export limits agreed with OPEC. As a result Venezuela prefers to sell more refined products and lighter crude and reduce export of the lower priced heavy crude.

**Unwise assumption**

For Lago this means that until the end of

this year only 180,000 barrels per day of heavy crude will be available. Also Lago does not get the traditional price anymore and now has to pay the normal notified price for heavy crude. Both factors together - higher price of its feedstock and refining at 60% capacity - causes losses for Lago. Exxon is very concerned with this situation but of course hopes for a better supply contract in the near future.

For the time being the basic policy is to find ways to operate with the present supply level with as little loss as possible. Foreign staff has been reduced by 50% and 300 of the 1200 local employees have accepted an early retirement plan.

Further reductions in personnel do not seem possible and are therefore not likely. Discussions with the Venezuelans about a new supply contract should soon start again. Exxon hopes to be able to negotiate a long term supply agreement, because only with a long term contract can the future of the refinery be safeguarded and new investment decisions be taken. Closing down the refinery is presently not considered as an alternative. However, this possibility can not be discarded. It will be unwise to assume that Exxon is willing to continue to operate its Lago refinery at a loss over an extended period of time.

Exxon executives have confirmed this during the talks with Prime Minister Don Martina, commissioner Nel Oduber and other representatives of the Central and Aruba Government. Exxon has carried the refinery through difficult times before and is prepared to do so again, but the long term prospects for Lago can only be positive, if Venezuela is willing to provide a long term supply agreement of heavy crude.


**No alternative**

Should it be discovered that Aruba has its own oil reserves, the situation would of course change drastically. But on short term this would not mean relief for Lago. Seeing the time it still takes to get the legislation ready, and the time needed for exploration and the starting up of commercial exploitation until sufficient quantities can be supplied, an estimated 5 years will have passed. For several years it will also not be known if commercially interesting reserves are present.

So even if everything works out positively, Aruba's own oil will not bring the solution of Lago's short term problems. For the time being Lago will need the crude that only Venezuela can supply, and as long as Venezuela will not supply more than 180,000 barrels a day, Lago and Aruba will have to adjust to that reality. For Aruba this means that not only Lago, but also many other enterprises will have to downscale their operations. The government will have to budget its expenditures to much reduced levels compared to recent years. Not only the profit tax coming in from Lago will be much less than it has been during 1979 - 1983, but also the tax income from other companies and individuals will be sharply reduced.

When the Bolivar devaluation and the financial crisis in Venezuela caused Aruba's tourism to drop for the first time in many years, part of the damage could be repaired by an ongoing growth in tourism from the USA.

Now that the Venezuelan crisis also affects Lago, no compensating factors present themselves. Arubans have never realized their vulnerable economic position better than during these crucial weeks of rumors and realities. Lago has always been considered the most stable pillar of the Aruban economy, but now it appears that the foundation of this pillar is held in place by forces beyond our control. Aruba's good neighbour relations with Venezuela and Exxon's determination to ensure a long term viability for its Aruba operations are positive factors in a negative development. Aruba will have to come to grips with this new reality, while of course holding out hope for a continued good relationship with Venezuela as a crude supplier and Exxon as operator of the refinery that has brought prosperity to this island. ■

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## VENEZUELA AND THE CARIBBEAN

### IN SEARCH OF A COHERENT POLICY

by Keith Grant

Venezuela's economic difficulties, as well as its involvement in Central American peace efforts, have pushed its Caribbean initiatives into the background over the past two years. The government of Luis Herrera Campins sought friendly relations with the region's democracies, but little hard cash was forthcoming. Financial assistance under the nation's joint oil scheme with Mexico, favouring 10 Central American and Caribbean countries, was cut back last year and no new programs have been drawn up. The new president, Jaime Lusinchi, has nevertheless said the Caribbean remains a priority in Venezuela's foreign policy.

The thrust of Caracas' relations with the Caribbean is expected to continue through the San Jose accord, small bilateral aid programs to individual islands and acting as counter-balance to any Cuban expansionist aims in the area.

Relations with Cuba remain cool, although Lusinchi has said publicly he hopes to improve the climate. However, Foreign Minister Isidro Morales Paul told the Foreign Press Corps recently this would have to be preceded by concrete steps by Cuba to recognize the right of political asylum and offer more protection to its embassy in Havana. There are presently 20 Cubans in refuge there.

The new social democrat government is presently reviewing its general policy options in the Caribbean, in the aftermath of the Grenada invasion. Venezuela was equivocal on the intervention, at first condemning the move and then letting it be known it was relieved at the elimination of a marxist threat less than 100 miles away.

To try and put coherence into Venezuelan policies, and improve expertise on the region, Lusinchi has appointed a new roving ambassador to the Caribbean. Career diplomat Francois Moanack has already undertaken a tour of Grenada, St. Lucia and Dominica, and plans further trips.

#### Shell

Among Moanack's responsibilities

will be the Dutch Antilles, where his main task will be to define Venezuela's at times inconsistent relations with the various political forces on the islands. In general, Venezuela has supported Prime Minister Don Martina's efforts to maintain political stability in the Antilles, of which three lie less than 30 miles from the South American country coast. On the other hand Aruban leader Betico Croes, whose separatist movement has done much to threaten that stability, has close ties in Venezuela and in particular with the ruling Accion Democratica Party.

The possibility of a Venezuelan stake in Shell's Curacao refinery remains just that. Officials in Maraven, the former Shell subsidiary in Venezuela, say the deal remains part of the company's long-term strategy but that the conditions are not right at present. A number of clouds still hang over the horizon. Petroleos de Venezuela, the state holding company, has few funds to spare for an investment of this scale in view of recently falling oil revenues. A similar deal last year, whereby Venezuela bought 50 per cent of Veba



Isidro Morales Paul, ministro de Relaciones Exteriores

Oel Ag's Ruhr refining complex, was criticized in congress and Lusinchi has opened an investigation into the contract. Lastly, the problem of finding sufficient markets for products refined in Curacao remains unsolved. Venezuela is tied by its OPEC quota of 1.675 million b/d and Energy and Mines Minister Arturo Hernandez Grisanti doubts there will be any improvement in the market before the year end. However, the Curacao refinery



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has the advantage of being relatively flexible and with some conversion facilities to process Venezuela's heavy crudes.

### Tourism

Venezuela is also unlikely to provide much immediate relief on tourism, which has all but evaporated in the wake of successive devaluations of the bolivar since february 1983. Viasa has just announced a doubling in air fares following the government's decision to let the bolivar float in the free market, and the currency's subsequent decline to more than 14 to the US dollar. Viasa itself has announced plans to drastically reduce routes and personnel, although the intention is apparently to maintain the Curacao link because of its convenience for connecting flights. Venezuelan tourists are nevertheless unlikely to return in droves until the Bolivar stabilises, as the government hopes, at lower levels. This might not be before the year end on present trends.

### Oil policy

Venezuela is expected, along with Mexico, to renew its oil aid scheme for the Caribbean when this expires in August, though financial constraints mean the conditions may be made less generous. The two countries already reduced the aid component last August to 20 per cent from 30, and raised the interest rate on loans to eight per cent from four.

These constraints mean also that the original plan to line up special refining capacity for the San Jose beneficiaries has been abandoned for the time being. The scheme is also unlikely to be extended to other Caribbean islands, although Venezuela received a request last year from the OECS countries. The problem is that shipments on such a small scale to numerous islands is uneconomical direct from Venezuela. Proposals to use Antigua's 20,000 b/d refinery as a distribution centre were rejected by Petroleos de Venezuela because of doubts over its management. One possible alternative would be to bring Trinidad into the scheme, as had been sought by Venezuela since the 1970s when it was extending oil assistance alone.

Elsewhere Hernandez Grisanti says Venezuela intends to strengthen the new informal group of Latin American oil ex-

porters — Venezuela, Ecuador, Mexico and Trinidad — to establish regular regional consultations. The aim of this group, whose next meeting is due in Trinidad at the end of May, is to avoid competition in export markets and set up technical cooperation between the respective industries.



Arturo Hernández Grisanti

Lusinchi is expected to continue the last government's new initiatives towards Trinidad. Trinidad's Foreign Minister Basil Ince already visited Caracas in February to discuss cooperation in energy, tourism and air transport. Also pending is a new fishing agreement and delimitation of maritime borders to define

areas for oil exploration around Venezuela's gulf of Paria which shows promise of offshore deposits. Talks between the respective Energy Ministers have so far centered around Trinidad processing small amounts of Venezuelan oil, which would help ease the critical situation at Trinidad's two refineries.

### Inconsistencies

The thaw in relations with Trinidad, long frozen as a result of Eric Williams' distrust of his giant neighbor, is perhaps the biggest recent achievement in Venezuela's Caribbean policy. Otherwise, island governments tend to remember unfulfilled promises and inconsistent policies which have affected the nation's credibility in the region.

In particular, Barbados has shown its feelings over what it regarded as broken commitments by not appointing a full ambassador in Caracas for four years. Venezuela, however, has full diplomatic representation in Bridgetown. These suspicions are also felt in the Dutch Antilles, which depend heavily on their neighbour for economic support. Despite numerous official visits back and forth, the status of relations between the two has yet to be defined fully and probably will not be until the islands' political future is clearer. ■



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## DARING THE TIMES

by Nancy Siegenthaler

*Not far from the hustling, in and out commotion of the Zuikertuintje supermarket is a serene, little Dutch village, cast in the early 19th century, Dutch colonial style, and nestled down in one of the greenest spots in Curacao. It is the new, Bloempot's shopping center, named after the expansive plantation it is built on.*

The shopping "village" is the creation of Mr. and Mrs. Tom and Vivienne Domhoff-Boom, present cultivators of the estate, and owners of the popular Bloempot's Book, Toy and Gift shop. They have taken as much care in every detail of the construction of the village as they do in their attentive selection of toys.

### Attraction

Built in the style of row houses, the two-storied shops are lined with covered porticos, trimmed with dark-stained, wooden borders, and dressed with colonial styled window panes.

Outside the gold and white complex hang antique-looking shop signs - seven at the present time, three more will be added before Mother's Day. Rental of the fully-equipped shops - 18 in all - has progressed nicely, say the Domhoffs.

One reason why shopkeepers are attracted here is the promise of continued growth. The long rows of two-storied

shops are just the beginning. The Domhoff's long-range strategy is to make the entire property behind their successful toy shop a gathering place, especially for families with small children.

In between the two long rows of shops is a wide avenue that leads to a circular plaza. Behind the plaza is the Bloempot cafeteria, scheduled to be opened sometime in May. Probably the only place in Curacao where customers will be able to buy Criollo food with espresso coffee, the cafeteria is being planned as the focal point of the "village", where customers will sit under an awned, outdoor terrace. There are additional plans for a playground, equipped with swingsets and video, family entertainment in the plaza, a park bordering the plaza area with a running stream, and plenty of shade trees. Streetlamps made in the 19th century style were imported from the Netherlands, benches will come from Austria, and wood will be imported from the forests of Lapland, for the playground.

### Growth

Such plans would seem over-ambitious for many Curacao developers, but the Domhoffs have demonstrated their assiduous predetermination for success before. The evolution of the Bloempot estate into a small shopping village

just seems to be a natural next step for the efficacious couple.

The Bloempot's enterprise had a modest beginning. Having lost his job as a result of the 1969 riots, Mr. Domhoff decided to give his own, small business a try. Together with his wife he decided to get into the toy business. Knowing very little about toys, and even less about retailing, the Domhoffs nevertheless, plunged into the business with their savings and the extra space their old plantation house supplied. The first Bloempot's Book, Toy and Gift shop was in a small, wooden house, where the original plantation owners' driver lived. From there, they built up their inventory.

"When we started, there was not a real toy shop for the whole year", said Mrs. Domhoff. "You had people selling toys, but it was more in December. And, of course, during the other months, you had what was left over. But not really a place where you could go into a shop and find only toys".

Besides a lot of research at the Curacao Chamber of Commerce, and hard work, the new business demanded from its owners unmitigated faith.

"Many, many of our friends said, 'Your'e crazy...Curacao is so bad! The best thing for you to do is to go out of the island! We're leaving the island, and it's silly...whoever is going to put a toy shop

HERE?!"', said Mrs. Domhoff. "But we said, it's really no problem...we want to try something. So, we started in the little, wooden house outside in our garden".

The shop's business grew steadily, meeting actual demand. Prior to 1969, said Mrs. Domhoff, toys in Curacao were ordered primarily from SouthEast Asian manufacturers, and were usually of an inferior quality.

After the Domhoffs introduced to Curacaon consumers the more durable, European and American-made toys, the demand for such toys continued to rise. It wasn't long before the toy shop demanded more space, and they moved into the vacant house where Mrs. Domhoff's grandparents used to live - their present shop.

### Imagination

Spurred on by the island's growing population, the toy shop flourished, and the Domhoffs contemplated using the remaining land on the plantation for the shopping village in the mid 1970s.

By then, the brackish water seeping

into the property had thwarted any chance to revive the once numerous fruit trees, and the land was overgrown by scrubby brush and swampgrass. But, after taking one look at the projected cost of building the shopping center, the Domhoffs dropped the idea. The cost the architect proposed in 1977 said Mrs. Domhoff, would have made the rents on the shops much too high. Besides, she added, they didn't feel the timing for such an endeavor was right.

"You have to learn to crawl before you can walk", she said. "And we were not even in the crawling state yet. We also lacked a good project manager. But, it was always there, and we were always thinking, and thinking about it. Then, all of a sudden", she said, "We said, OK, let's do something".

This time, however, the Domhoffs requested an architectural plan that shop keepers could readily afford. Five years and three million guilders later, they started with the infrastructure, which included filling in pools of water that had formed after the construction crew began to dig. The only other problem they were confronted with at the outset was the Domhoff children, who were extremely

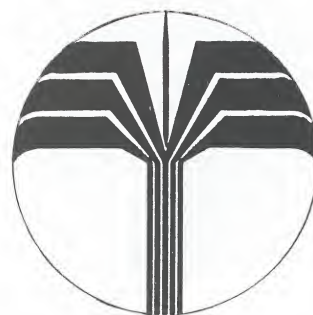
angry that their expansive, green playground was quickly being "destroyed". The family, in consequence, took painstaking care not to destroy any more trees than were absolutely necessary in the construction. They plan, in addition, to plant many more, with an emphasis on mahogany trees, because of their deep, dark shade.

### Perseverance

Financing for the project was not a big problem, even though long-term loans are difficult to obtain in Curacao. The Domhoffs' reputation as successful business persons, and the history of Mrs. Domhoff's family, a well-established, Curacaon family, helped to secure any necessary loans for the project.

What's more, the current, tight economy does not disillusion the Domhoffs, who feel the timing for the project is right on target. "You have to run so you don't miss the boat", said Mrs. Domhoff. "And you just hope and pray for the best. The economy will be good again", she said. "You cannot go on complaining. You have to look ahead and continue. And you have to stick to what you start".

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## MODERN INITIATIVE AND HISTORICAL BEAUTY

by Nancy Siegenthaler

Landhuis Brievengat, once the mansion belonging to a plantation for aloe and cochenille, is now busily cultivating customers. The outdoor terrace that fronts the grand plantation house is rapidly becoming one of the most popular places on the island both with tourists and locals - a development set into motion by two enterprising and resourceful gentlemen.

Traditionally a family home, the landhuis still hosts family-style outings, including live music and shows by local craftspeople, on the last Sunday of every month. The rest of the time, it is a perfect spot to relax and enjoy a drink after a day's work, or to lose oneself in the romance of a time long past.

Part of the allure is the landhuis' setting. Up on a hill, visitors look out over a landscape of rolling, red hills, dotted with windmills and cactus trees. Far in the distance are the lights of a large stadium, the Sentro Deportivo Korsow, and the rush of the city is even more distant. A constant cool breeze rustles the palm trees bordering this hand-made, shady terrace and the remembrance of the days of old, when life was simpler, is keenly sensed. The house, joined to the land, is festive, especially at night, when the lighting around it shows off its marigold-colored, grand entryway, its dark green shutters, adorned with the typical, Dutch-styled, curved gables that are trimmed with white reliefs like filigree.



No one knows exactly when the Landhuis was built, but architect Serge Alexenko puts the date in the early 1700's, as it emulates other Curacao country houses that were built in that era. Under Alexenko's directions, the Society for the Preservation of Monuments restored the house in 1954, after it was handed over to the Society by Shell (the oil company had previously used the area as a 'water plantation'. Its wells operated by windmills, were active for 29 years). The restoration was assiduously watched by Alexenko, to the effect that nothing in the original design of the house was changed.

One look at the respectfully meticulous restoration reveals a paradigm in historical preservation. From the Dutch-styled reliefs on the outside, to the cobblestoned corridors inside, every unadulterated place symbolizes a time long past, which most people will only read about in books, or see in pictures. Here, it is represented in exquisite simplicity and visitors pass almost reverently through the arched rooms.

Mr. Hoetjes and Mr. de Swart were

careful to choose only Curacao antique furniture for the house's airy, dark interior. Much of the dark-stained, wooden furniture and antique accessories came from a similar house in Scharloo. But antique furnishings were not easy to come by, according to Mr. de Swart, who still haunts the ads sections of the daily newspapers.

### Home

Moreover, everything added to the house, including fresh coats of paint, must be approved by the Society for the Preservation of Monuments. Yet, the house is not preserved in the usual, stuffy, museum pattern, with restrictive glass showcases and roped-off corners. Visitors enter into a former family's home.

The Landhuis was until quite recently home for the dean of the University of the Netherlands Antilles, and before that of the president of the national airline, ALM. Entering into the house is much like stopping for a visit at a friend's summer cottage, the doors and windows of which have been left open for the sea breeze, even though, at the moment, there is no one in the house. There are no institutional-looking mannequins, no pointing in which direction to walk, no collection plates at the front door. Indeed, the charming aspect of this presentation is its natural, albeit, seemingly abandoned state, and the visitor is literally allowed to step back in time, and assimilate the surroundings.

For those who prefer historical interpretations, however, employees, sometimes dressed in the centuries-old style, are very accommodating and adaptable. They can usually be found serving drinks at the Landhuis' popular bar, outside, on

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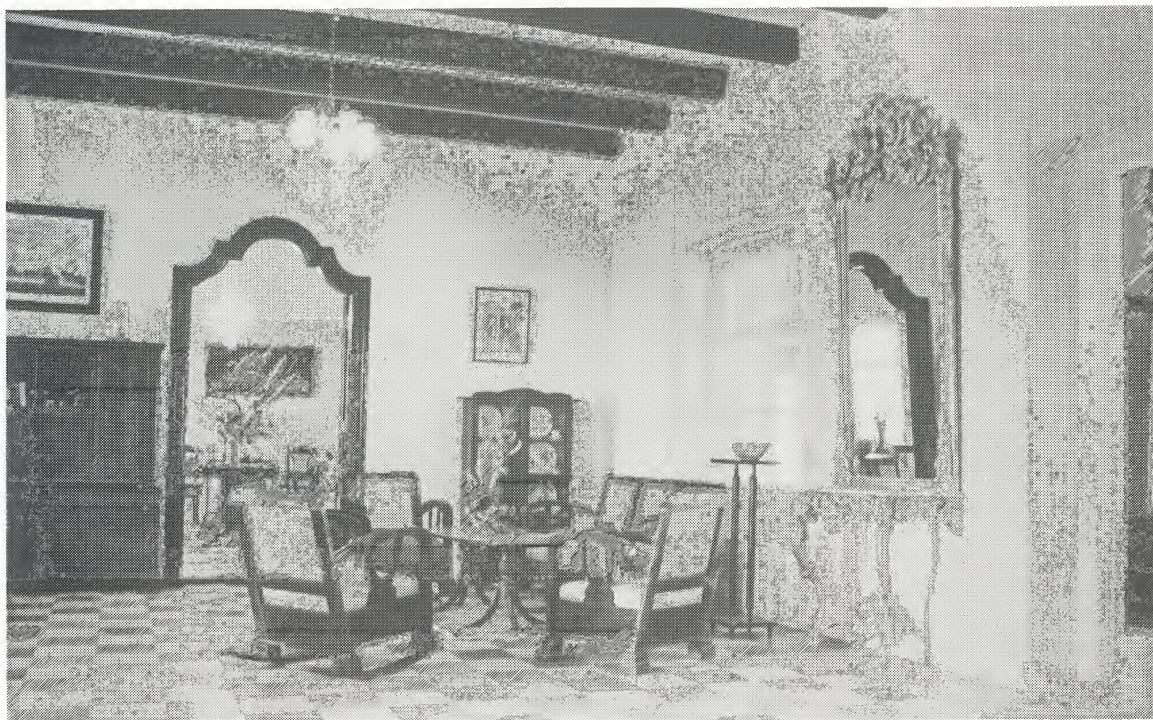
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the terrace.

**Rumors**

Lit up at night by the 19th century street lamps imported from The Netherlands, the recently constructed rustic lounge does not at all detract from the overall original splendor of the Landhuis. Though the terrace fronts the house, visitors' attention is more often than not diverted to the unusual watch towers on either side of the grand staircase. Small enough to prevent obstructing the view from the parapet, the towers were at one time, nonetheless, formidable. Equipped with barrel holes for guards using rifles, they were, rumor has it, subsequently used for extramarital romps. Nowadays, goldsmith Fechi Regales creates his distinguished filigree work in the towers.

**Success**

Brievengat was originally the most conspicuous estate in Eastern Curaçao, its entry pillars once stood stately, midway along what is now Gosieweg. While the property surrounding the estate continues to shrink, the number of visitors, both to the house and to the cocktailbar, is growing. Its major attractions, say Mr. de Swart, are the good care the estate has received, and its historical value.

"It's doing what it's meant for," he said, "showing how it really was here. We put a lot of money into it, but it's coming along. 1983 was the first year that we had it," he said, "and it will be another

two years before we see a profit." Nevertheless, the number of visitors has grown to approximately 3,000 a month.

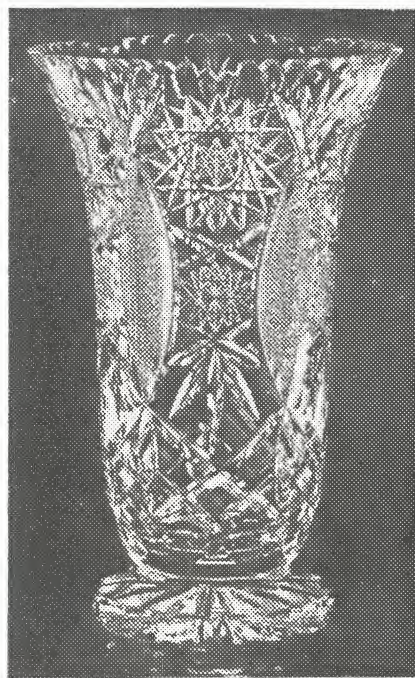
Although the society for the Preservation of Monuments ultimately decides how the Landhuis will be used, de Swart made it clear that any group may use the grounds for nearly any purpose. The place recently came alive with a pre-Carnival Ban Topa, a Wabi Club meeting (antique

cars club), an antique dolls display and a flower show. Nearly all of these activities are carried on outdoors on the terrace. But when the doors to the house are opened (Monday through Friday, 9AM-12Noon, 3PM-6PM), chances are, there will be someone meandering through its cool, dark rooms, soaking up the tranquil atmosphere that was family life in Curaçao, 200 years before. ■

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PEOPLE



The occasion was in more than one sense a special one. Only twice in the past twenty-five years was a similar award given by the US Department of Justice to a foreign Attorney General to express its appreciation for assistance received. Thus when this honour was bestowed on **Mr. L.R. Nahr**, the Netherlands Antilles' Attorney General, on April 3, it was first of all a moment of great personal satisfaction.

During his long and outstanding career Mr. Nahr rendered the USA invaluable services in particular with regard to intercepting the traffic in drugs. This was fully recognized by the Department of Justice in Washington, which invited Mr. Nahr last March to visit the capital for the above mentioned purpose. Says Mr. Nahr: 'it was quite a surprise'. He did, however, insist that the official invitation should be directed at the Netherlands Antilles' government. If his accepting the award would at the same time serve the interests of the country he was willing to go.

Well it was. Press coverage of the Antilles in relation to the ongoing negotiati-

ons concerning the tax treaty had at more than one occasion been most negative. In several leading US papers, notably the Washington Post, the Antilles had been depicted as a freeport for tax-evaders, drug smugglers and criminals in general. It had even been suggested that the Antilles were most unwilling to co-operate with the US law enforcement agencies. The damage inflicted on the country's reputation was considerable. Obviously the presentation of the award offered a welcome opportunity to gainsay this ugly kind of disinformation.

Although generally keeping himself in the background while awaiting Capitol Hill's approval of his successor's appointment, Attorney General Mr. William French Smith decided to present the award personally to Mr. Nahr. The ceremony was attended by Mrs Nahr (left) and the Antilles' Prime Minister Mr. Dom Martina and his wife (right), who happened to be in Washington in connection with the tax treaty negotiations.



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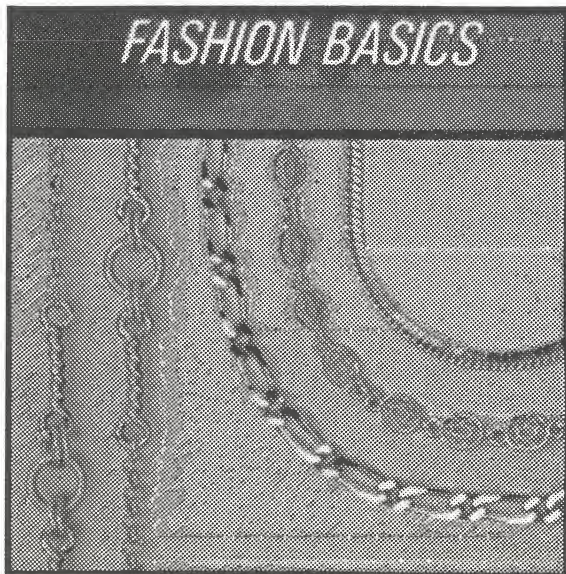
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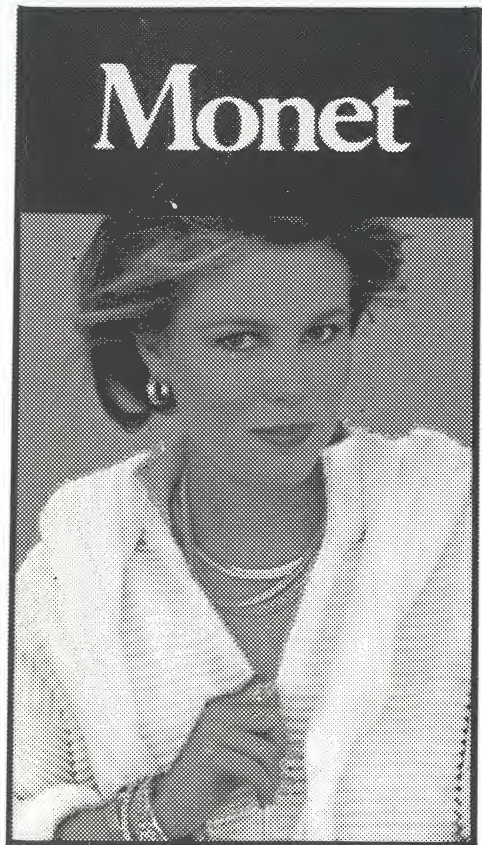


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SUMMING UP TEN YEARS FAVI

JUSTICE RATHER THAN CHARITY

**Healthy eye-sight does not imply the gift of vision nor does blindness the lack of it. An observation, the first part of which will be more readily agreed to than the latter. The handicapped, blind or otherwise, are still considered by many as pitiful, less than normal and therefore as objects of charity. An attitude strongly objected to by Aruba's blind-care foundation FAVI, which celebrated its tenth anniversary last March. Demanding full rights and recognition for the island's visually handicapped FAVI not only acquired international fame for the quality of its programmes aimed at integration of the blind in society, but also made name as a movement for social reform. From a democratic perspective FAVI has become one of the most hopeful phenomena in Aruban society.**

In contrast to many charitable institutions FAVI's origins did not lie with the question *'what can we do for the handicapped?'* but rather with a vision of social justice and human rights.

From the very beginning the foundation aimed at restoring the visually handicapped's self-esteem and making the community recognize them as fully equal human beings. Consequently its programmes never had the condescending character of a lot of well-intended charity work.

**Justice**

A first inventory confirmed an expected 3 pro mille rate. It also revealed a high level of shame both on the part of the visually handicapped themselves and of their relations. As a result many such handicapped lived extremely secluded lives with no possibility of adaptation or further development.

But most seriously of all it brought to light a situation of great social injustice. Most visually handicapped had to live from such a meagre income, that they would have fallen into dire poverty, if Aruban society did not still know strong family ties. A situation that may have saved the handicapped from worse, but which did increase their dependency on others in no small measure. The first report of the foundation on the Aruban situation in this respect speaks of a social vacuum.

**Magazines**

During the ten years of its existence FAVI developed step by step programmes and activities to reverse the above indicated abuse. Group sessions in which the people discuss their own situation and

exchange experiences is probably the most basic of these activities. Like the extensive home-teaching programme, including training in mobility, braille, typing, cooking etc., it enables people to stand tall. There is, according to FAVI's philosophy, no reason why they should not. Nor is there any reason why they should not be involved in FAVI's decision-making. The majority of FAVI's board consists of visually handicapped. The fact that today two social workers, a resource-room teacher and a score of volunteers are involved in FAVI's activities does not in the least intrude upon this principle of self-reliance.

A most important step forward in conscientizing the visually impaired was taken in 1977 with the first publication of SINTA, a spoken weekly magazine. Subscribers, which are supplied with a cassette recorder, were (and are) thus enabled to inform themselves of current affairs on the island, the country and the world at

large. The success of this initiative was such that a separate foundation had to be created to devote itself entirely to this par-

ticular aspect of FAVI's work. The FAL-PA operating from a fully equipped recording studio in the Public Library today publishes besides SINTA also an English spoken magazine called SOUND TRACK. It should be observed that these are the only spoken magazines in the entire Caribbean. Presently the Caribbean Council for the Blind (CCB) is looking into the possibilities of making Aruba a production centre for other islands in the region.

**Protest**

In order to remedy the social vacuum situation, the visually impaired find themselves in, FAVI has continually been knocking on the government's door. The annual reports of the foundation, which it should be mentioned are very enjoyable reading material, speak of both encouraging and disappointing experiences. In almost every instance FAVI received the customary political lip service only to be met by bureaucratic indifference afterwards. Sheer perseverance on the side of the foundation more than once forced the authorities to comply. In a number of instances FAVI scored victories reaching far beyond the immediate scope of its own work. In 1979 the Island Government was approached with a request to finance an orientation visit to European institutions for one of the board members. With a view to its tight financial situation the government declared it could only subsidize part of the costs. FAVI gladly accepted a grant of Naf. 3,000 but when it learned four weeks later that the same government had decided to subsidize with no less than Naf. 40,000 the Miss Teenage International elections it protested strongly.

Its argument that this kind of charity for a minority group was unacceptable in view of the large amount spent on an affair



Preparing magazine

not exactly respectful of women, caused a heated debate on the island. In the end the government backed down and decided to stop subsidizing such events.

An attempt by the same Island Government to censor the spoken magazines to prevent criticism by the opposition from reaching the blind, was countered strongly and successfully by FAVI's board.

**Social security**

One most important item on FAVI's priority list has as yet not been fulfilled. It concerns a proposal called 'law is law', which aims at the introduction of a national insurance act for rehabilitation and labour disability. During the formation talks prior to the establishment of the first Martina Cabinet FAVI presented its detailed proposal to Mr. Betico Croes and Mr. Don Martina, the leaders of the two major political parties in the country. Both professed to be deeply impressed and indicated their intention to act upon the proposal once the new government would be in charge. That, however, was the last FAVI heard about it. Caught up in an acceleration of its activities FAVI found no time to pressure the successive governments into action. It recently decided to take up the

issue once more and bring it to the attention of the authorities.

**International**

A very successful aspect of FAVI's activities concerns the assistance given to visually impaired children. Initially this meant helping children to prepare themselves for being sent away to institutions in the Netherlands. Over the years the insight dawned that this practice implied extra hardships for the youngsters, who more often than not never returned to their island and families. Integration in the regular educational system was the only and obvious alternative. Welcome advice was given by Mrs. Sherry Raynor of The International Institute for Visually Impaired 0-7 Inc. of East Lansing in the USA. The Island Government co-operated by making available a teacher especially trained for that purpose.

Mrs. Raynor also happened to be in charge of organizing the first International Symposium on Visually impaired children. FAVI was urged to send a representative to the congress, which was held in Tel Aviv, June 1981. The report on FAVI's work and underlying philosophy so impressed the conference that Aruba was designated host for the second inter-

national gathering, which took place in May, 1983.

**No nonsense**

Respect for human dignity and down to earthness typify FAVI. The following quotation from the 1981 annual report underlines this observation. Referring to the fact that 1981 had been proclaimed the year of the handicapped the report states: *'that outspoken democratic institution, in which the voice of the smallest nation carries the same weight as that of the largest, the General Assembly of the United Nations, did not ask us nor any handicapped person for his opinion, when it unanimously accepted a motion proclaiming 1981 as the year of the handicapped. It simply forgot to inquire whether the handicapped themselves would agree to such a 'year'.'*

FAVI obviously did not. All it would mean was a load of extra work, mainly consisting of endless meetings with well-meaning but little informed people. FAVI preferred to carry on with its already overloaded schedule, having time nor use for this sudden and fashionable outburst of charity. ■

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## AS FATAL DISEASE LOSES GROUND

## CURAÇAO CANCER SOCIETY INTENSIFIES COUNTER-ATTACK

Fatal may no longer be the correct word to use in connection with the world's most dreaded disease. The adjective is at least misleading. During the past 15 years survival rates have gone up remarkably. Even in the case of children. The National Cancer Institute (USA) recently reported that while in the 1950's death virtually equaled incidence, during the period 1978-1980, 50% of children affected by cancer survived more than five years. The same and often better i.e. longer lasting results are being achieved with regard to different types of the disease. This applies in particular to cancer of the breast and cervix, the most occurring types in the Netherlands Antilles. This increasing success must be attributed to improved therapy and the growing rate of early detection.

### Exchange

With regard to the latter much credit should be given to the national and international cancer societies. Their work, carried out largely by highly motivated volunteers, has become an indispensable counterpart of medical treatment. Methods to promote early detection and rehabilitate recovering patients are constantly being improved and as a result more effective. The exchange of information and experience on an international level has proven to be particularly helpful and stimulating to societies operating in smaller communities like Curaçao. Says Carmen Perret-Gentil, secretary of Curaçao's Cancer Society "Het Prinses Wilhelmina Fonds" reporting on a recent congress of Latin American Cancer Societies in Panama: "It was a most instructive and inspiring experience. Even though the situation in most Latin American countries is very different from ours, if only because they are all so much larger, we learned much that can be applied



Panama congress

here". She lists nine recommendations for immediate action.

They regard information to the general public, the role of the government, a programme of prevention pap-tests, rehabilitation and fundraising.

### Center

The Prinses Wilhelmina Fonds in the meantime is well positioned to carry them out and thereby step up its already impressive contribution. Since October of last year a full-time social worker has joined the ranks of the otherwise volunteer organization. The PWF, moreover, expects to open up a permanent information center in town within weeks. Two developments which should make the society's work even more effective.

Providing information ranks high on the PWF's agenda. Teaching people to look for a change in their body and for what changes is essential with regard to early detection of cancer, says PWF's president Diana Capriles. For that purpose the new center will be open daily to the general public. Trained volunteers will provide the visitors with all relevant information. Already engaged in giving instruction to women groups on the island, this work will now also be intensified and broadened.

One of the Panama inspired recommendations suggests reaching out to the schools. As a result a package is being prepared including slides for use in the higher grades of high-schools. Experience in other countries has taught that a personal approach through the educational system is much more effective than by

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means of the mass media.

Two folders will soon be published by the PWF, one informing women about a pap-test campaign to promote early detection of cancer of the cervix and the other to help patients to prepare themselves for the side-effects of chemotherapy.

The prosthesis bank, presently housed in the private home of Mrs. Capriles, will be moved to the new center. This should enable the society to professionalize the rehabilitation aspect of its endeavours. It should be observed that the psychological impact of a mastectomy (breast removal) f.e. is of an extremely traumatic nature due to the prevailing conceptions of the man-woman relationship, which are much like those on the South American continent. Working from the center it is hoped that also husbands can now be involved in the rehabilitation programme.

#### Government

An important issue raised at the Panama conference concerned fundraising. The delegates representing cancer societies in 17 Latin American countries agreed unanimously that the battle against

the disease should be a prime concern of national health services.

To back up this opinion the conference mentioned the high incidence of the disease, the fact that it often affects wage-earners in their most productive years, the resulting impact on their families income and the extremely high costs of treatment.

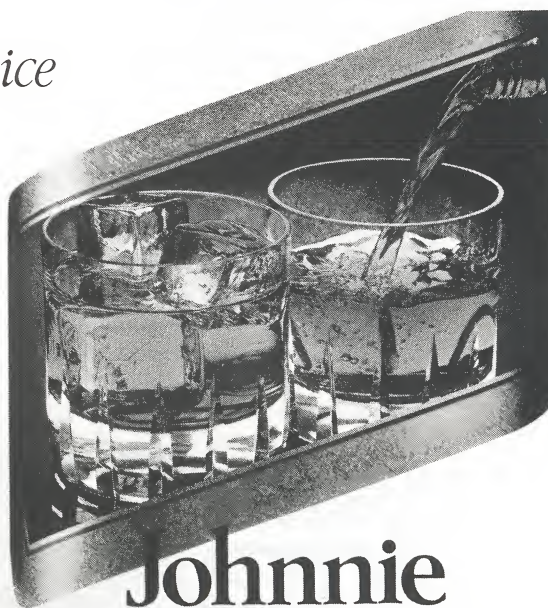
Although the point made in Panama may seem obvious, most cancer societies depend almost entirely on their own fundraising. The Curaçao Island Government subsidizes the PWF's work with what amounts to a mere pittance: Naf. 1000,-- per year! Fostering a greater awareness on the part of the authorities is therefore another of the society's objectives.

It should on the other hand be mentioned that, according to Mrs. Capriles, the public responds most generously to appeals made by the PWF. Not only has the society been able to finance all its activities, assist people who had to go abroad for treatment and make prostheses available often at a reduced rate but it has also donated much needed technical equipment to the local hospital.

#### Cobalt

With regard to the matter of equipment the PWF's board expresses great concern about the hitherto unused Cobalt - machine, donated to the hospital by the International Cancer Center, a private organization which planned to establish a cancer clinic on the island. The machine being 2 years old and having a life-span of 5 1/2 years, valuable radiation is lost daily. Not wishing to discuss the questions which have been raised concerning ICC's motives and treatment reliability Mrs. Capriles is willing to state that radiotherapy is a must for the island. In the absence of such a therapy the government is presently spending at least Naf. 500,000.-- per year on treatment of patients in Caracas (Ven). Patients who have to travel to the mainland receive, moreover, hardly any guidance as to what to expect. Treatment on the island would certainly alleviate their plight. Not in the least because the volunteer workers of the Prinses Wilhelmina Fonds would be there to assist in the struggle against what may be a losing but still very devastating disease. ■

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In 1982 Wim Rutgers published an article in *Restant*, a Belgian magazine, about the *home* or rather *house motif* in Caribbean literature. Abbreviated by the author and translated by AR, the article is re-published underneath.

In the original version Mr. Rutgers introduces his European readers to the Caribbean by describing in brief the historical and sociological background of the region. The Caribbean peoples, which he calls a unique cultural blend of European, African and Asian elements, have always been on the move. They live on the islands, but search for their roots in the continents from whence they came.

Mr. Rutgers is aware of the fact that the *home-motif* is also found in European literature. There it symbolizes shelter, safety, but also isolation and seclusion. In the Caribbean literature the house represents being, living on the island of one's birth. He subsequently endeavours to give some examples in which the specific Caribbean situation presents itself in the use of the *home-motif*.

Probably V.S. Naipaul of Trinidad, whose work received so much criticism, was the one who depicted this motif in the most discerning manner in his voluminous novel *A House for Mr. Biswas* (1961). '*Biswas' desperate fight to gain his own house is symbolic of man's need to develop an authentic identity*', writes Robert D. Hamner in *Critical Perspectives on V.S. Naipaul*. Mr. Biswas' house is shaky, it has no curtains, the columns are rotten, the windows do not close, the doors can neither be shut nor opened, the plastering is rough and full of holes and cracks, the floors lie aslant and the foundation leaves much to be desired, etc. But the house is his! '*As a boy he had moved from one house of strangers to another; and since his marriage he felt he had lived nowhere but in the houses of the Tulsis, at Hanumen House in Arwacas, in the decaying wooden house at Shorthills, in the clumsy concrete house in Port of Spain. And now at the end he found himself in his own house, on his own half-lot of land, his own portion on the earth. That he should have been responsible for this seemed to him, in these last months stupendous.*'

In Naipaul's opinion Caribbean man is not capable of building himself a solid house and a well organized society. The I-figure in V.S. Naipaul's *The mimic man* does build a luxury house in Roman style on his native island of Isabella,

# THE HOUSE

## IN CARIBBEAN LITERATURE

by Wim Rutgers

where he converts a parcel of land of an old citrus plantation he inherited into sites and becomes immensely wealthy. But he is not happy, for he feels the lack of empathy between himself and the earth on which he walks and he knows that whatever happens, the gulf between those will remain, '*that in a society like ours, fragmented, inorganic, no link between man and the landscape, a society not held together by common interests, there was no true internal source of power, and that no power was real which did not come from the outside.*'

The I-figure, who is an author, comes to his end, quiet and isolated in a London hotel room, estranged from home and land.

But I wish to limit myself mainly to Surinamese and Netherlands Antillean examples and will dwell consecutively on three aspects.

### The house as colonial symbol; the plantation house versus the slave hut.

One of the nicest examples of the symbol function of the plantation house still is *Mijn zuster de negerin*, written by Cola Debrot in 1934 / 1935. In his description of Miraflores we can see very clearly the segmentation between white masters and black slaves. The central character Frits Rupperecht, after being away for many years, visits his parents' plantation house after they have died: '*Frits continued to hesitate in front of the doorway leading from the gallery into the living-room, (...) which in his imagination had signified the gate separating those two worlds. (...) In the living room it was always his father and mother or his white relatives that he met. In the narrow front and back galleries there always lingered a slight hint of*

*the odour of the coloured people. A smell he had often felt homesick for in Europe.*' When he arrives back in Curaçao Frits finds himself between two worlds: the white man's and the black man's.

But the old 'landhuizen' with their thick walls and towers like forts, symbols of the traditional power of the whites have fallen into disrepair and do not function any longer. In *Weekend pilgrimage* Tip Marugg says: '*...the old protestant families of yore, the plantation and slave owners and merchants; harsh, dependable, devoutly christian, efficient. The old generations that had wielded the scepter with iron hands over green courtyards, black slaves and white 'landhuizen'. They at the time formed the pillars that supported the island community. They were kings and their kingdom was the economic centre of a small isolated world all by itself: the 'landhuis' with the plantation. Where are they now?*'

The large Curaçao 'landhuizen' lie abandoned and dilapidated; goats walk around in them and bats make their habitat there in the novels *De rots der struikeling* en *Een vreemdeling op aarde* by Boeli van Leeuwen. In *De stille plantage* by the Surinamese Albert Helman the primeval forest has reclaimed its rights and the remains of the once prosperous Bel Exil are hardly recognizable to the son who later on wants to know what had happened...: '*Primeval forest, wilderness, desert. Nobody knew that once, for many years the Stille Plantage had existed here.*' Gaston finds in the forest '*among the shrubs that he pushed aside a few fallen beams of a house, half-rotten and penetrated by insects until they had become like sponges...*', not more than that. ▶

Thus the 'landhuizen' and plantation houses function as symbols of the colonial era lying behind us and the social inequality resulting therefrom. Opposite the rich 'landhuizen' were the huts of the negro labourers. It is with them that Frank Martinus Arion wants to show solidarity, when he rejects the proud 'landhuizen' as so-called bearers of civilization and symbolizes them as places where fear reigned, and chooses for the slave huts in the valley below ... those clumsily built slanted houses, painted in motifs from the ancestral country. Here we see the European 'landhuis' as opposite the African slave hut, as a symbolic confrontation of two cultures, which for centuries continued to exist separately alongside each other. Tip Marugg says in *Weekend pilgrimage*: "Not many whites have entered into a real, inhabited negro hut". Compare in this regard f.e. the social contrast as in *La rue Cases Nègres* by Joseph Zobel. I'll quote from the English translation *Black Shack Alley*: *Black Shack Alley comprised some three dozen ramshackle wooden huts, covered with galvanize, standing at regular intervals at the side of the hill. To the top there stood, majestically, the house of the manager, whose wife ran a little store. Between 'the house' and Shack Alley, could be found the overseer's little house, the mule compound, the manure pile. Below Shack Alley and all around stretched vast fields of cane, at the end of which one could see the factory". The imposing house symbolizes the manager's power over things and men.*

In Jean Rhys' *Wide Sargasso Sea*, of Dominica, the people put fire to the detestable country mansion Coulibri and in doing so drive away the inhabitants, a group of creole whites, for whom there is no place any longer after emancipation. The separation between blacks and whites is definite. "The house was burning, the yellow-red sky was like a sunset and I knew that I would never see Coulibri again. Nothing would be left... When they had finished, there would be nothing left but blackened walls and the mounting stone. That was always left. That could not be stolen or burned. Then, not so far off, I saw Tia and her mother and I ran to her, for she was all that was left of my life as it had been. We had eaten the same food, slept side by side, bathed in the same river. As I ran, I thought, I will live with Tia and I will be like her. Not to leave

*Coulibri. Not to go. Not. When I was close I saw the jagged stone in her hand but I did not see her throw it. I did not feel it either, only something wet, running down my face. I looked at her and I saw her face crumple up as she began to cry. We stared at each other, blood on my face, tears on hers. It was as if I saw myself. Like in a looking-glass."*

In his story *Petra su kas* Pierre Lauffer shows how the black Curaçolene inherits the large 'landhuis' from the white 'shon', which touches upon the same problem in a less revolutionary, but just as effective manner.

In the decline of the plantation house the demise of white superiority and colonial power in the Caribbean is described symbolically.

#### **The house as social symbol; the mansion as against the hovel in the court-yard.**

A second symbol function is the one of the social difference between rich and poor. Also this is found in *Mijn zuster de negerin*, in which the white man Frits is the heir of a large mansion in the city and the landlord of a great number of small houses around it. In *Dubbelspel* by Frank Martinus Arion the white owner has been replaced by the black one. In this novel houses play a very important part.

Manchi, one of the main characters, has built an enormous house with eight bedrooms on top of a hill! In addition he wants a second house at Westpunt in Curaçao, because the rich makamba's (European Dutchmen) and Curaçolenes also have one. Opposite this status symbol, built according to a model on an Italian postcard, stands at the foot of the hill Boeboe Fiel's decayed little house, dating from the time of slavery. He does have plans to build a better house, but he never got any further than digging for the foundation, which has caved in again.

The Saban, Chamon Nicolas, also has a few small houses, which he lets and which are built from material that has mainly been stolen. Finally Janchi Pau, the fourth main character, has a half completed house, which he will finish building at the end of the book. He is the bearer of the book's idea, together with Solema, and he builds for the right reason: not for status, no stealthy capitalism, no laxity by not finishing it, but building out of love. Thus building one's house becomes symbolic for contributing towards building up one's country.

In contrast to the large mansions we find the slum-dwellings. As a denunciation against the bad housing conditions of a large group of people a street theatre group performed the play *Kas sin dak* (house without a roof), while the main characters of *De boog* by Edward de Jongh live in the archways in old Riffort, without an adequate roof over their heads. The central character has some money put away and wants to get away from this situation of poverty, but loses his life before being able to accomplish this.

In this kind of work we find the connection with the Caribbean yard-literature, which describes the horrors of bonded life behind the large mansion. Escaping from that is not possible, as already evident from the title of Orlando Patterson's *The Children of Sisyphus*. Other authors who deal with this theme are e.g. Herbert G. de Lisser and Roger Kais. The latter's *The hills were joyful together* "is a mosaic of the various aspects of slum life, which is experienced by countless Jamaicans who live in the 'yard'. The tremendous underdevelopment of colonial societies is paid for in unemployment, poverty, diseases, moral degeneracy and most of all, the tremendous violence that one finds in the urban centers of colonial countries".

This theme is found in Surinam again and again. The large mansion there often still hides the shabby bonded houses behind it. In his story *Het huis in de straat* Benny Ooft writes the following about Paramaribo's large city-mansions: "As seen from the street, it seemed to look down severely on the passers-by and it was almost impossible to ignore the presence of the House. It stood there almost importunately with its nine rows of windows at the front, somewhat secluded from the street. The severity of the frontal appearance was interrupted by a playful, elegant balcony, running across the entire facade, supported by six columns...."

Also from the side it seemed as if it could not possibly be enclosed and towered high above the neighbouring houses.... Although our house as seen from the street was already large and often drew admiring comments from passers-by because of its enormous size, at prima vista one could, however, never guess how big it really was. It extended deep into the large court-yard lying behind it and the rooms were far removed from the bustle of the street. When tired from walking one would pass through the

*nengredoro (pathway), leading to the front door, one would really get the feeling of having arrived home. Away from the dangerous, busy, noisy world outside to the safe "inside" that it offered."*

**R** Dobru (ps. of Robin Ravales) in the volume of stories *Wasoema* (washerwoman) looks behind the large mansion at the court-yard, where the people live in poverty in the small rooms that were formerly used as slave quarters. The same Benny Ooft writes in his Introduction to Dobru's volume: "*a denunciation . . . . of the nearly animal state in which human life exists in those court-yards. A denunciation of the social phenomena accompanying this life. Prostitution forced by necessity, fatherless children, disease and criminality. A denunciation of the landlords, who for generations have collected the rent for these hovels, without worrying at all about even the most primary hygiene.*" In the first story '*A prai foe Bigi Dorsi*' Dobru himself says: "*It would be easy for me to idealize this courtyard, to write a kind of novel about it with Bigi Dorsi as central character, but what concerns me here is the injustice and neglect that are still devastating our society. Almost unnoticed. Injustice and neglect that we do not even think about, at least so it seems. We act as if everyone in our country is already doing well, because we are doing well. Uninterested as we are in the fate of our citizens in these court-yards. Yes, these people have also voted, all of them. They have all also attended our political meetings. And they are the most fanatical supporters of our leaders. They have expected miracles from their leaders. But they are still in a mess.*

**A** And a last example from Leo Henri Ferrier's *Atman*: "*The gateways are open entrances leading into these muddy premises, on which rotting unpainted hovels are erected. They have dislocated cooking windows. Dirty curtains, soiled by many grimy children's hands. Large boards nailed together serve as doors, which are closed with a big pin on the inside, when they go to bed. There are no gates in the gateways. Only a few rotting beams, which still seem to hold together the rusty remains of the fence made of galvanized sheets. Everywhere weeds that have shot up high. Stinging-nettles and also a kind that almost looks like clarion, a vegetable. The sewers are open and filthy and*

*in front of the the hovels the water flows, no stands still in a filthy gutter. Across that gutter rotting beams with on them likewise rotting boards, which are not always fastened to them, those are the small bridges to reach the street.(...)*

*Damned foreigners visit these court-yards again and again to stealthily take pictures of this life'".*

The dilapidated plantation house may well have functioned as a symbol of the power of the white plantocracy that has disappeared, the large mansions still stand erect at the street side, hiding from view the court-yards lying behind them and the harsh contrasts between rich and poor. The Caribbean author has sharply seen these hidden court-yards and included them in his work.

### **T** he house as cultural symbol; slumming as opposed to renewal.

The Surinamese novel *A vonden aan de rivier* by Benny Ch. Ooft takes place in the little plantation village Karolina on the Surinam river. This small village which used to be quite prospering, has sharply declined as a result of urbanization, which pulled all the young people to the city. In his introduction the author says: "*There was only one thread that was important to me and I have clung to that. The red thread of ruin running through Karolina's history. There are so many Karolina's in our country, with as many red threads'".* A symbol of the ruin is that old men like Tjas and Peetje Marie themselves no longer believe that the village has any future. The house belonging to Tjas, the owner of the only little shop in the village is in dire need of repairing, but Tjas wants to do it with inferior material: "*Ah Peetje Marie, why should I use more expensive material? After all the thing need not last that much longer and the wood I have used will still last for a couple of years.*" At the end of the story he still uses the best wood, bruinhart. One should not give up in the struggle against ruin. The house must be repaired well; the struggle for an independent existence continues!

Raymond van den Berg in *Strafhok* by Bea Vianen neglects his house on purpose and in doing so protests against the government policy. The squalor of his house symbolizes his own psychological ruin and the decadent "strafhok mentality" of his country. In *Geen onderdelen* by the same author the central character, Atila, back in Surinam from Holland, tries,

from the escaped revolutionary M's former home at Plantageweg, a horrible out-of-the-way spot, plagued by mosquitoes and bathed in human suffering, to make the people conscious and make them fight for a social revolution in the society that is organized in such a rotten way: "The whole lot was in the process of becoming corrupt, just like the house where the Hindustan politician had lived".

**T** he poet Shrinivasi described with much insight the decline of Commewijne District in connection with an exhibition of paintings by F. Agerkop under the motto: *Commewijne is dying*. The district is going to ruin and is dragging the people along in that ruin. How many men are really connected with their land and their house appears clearly in Edgar Cairo's voluminous novel *Djari / Erven*. The spot where your navel-cord is buried, under the threshold of the front door or in the immediate vicinity of the home, is the place where you always feel at home and which you will always defend: "*Your piece of land was literally the land that you inherited, historically!*"

As a negro it had not been given to you! It had been obtained! A person therefore sometimes talked with his piece of land and his court-yard mother living thereupon. Not for nothing! Your soul was there! She had to guard you! And you, you had to go on being YOU! That was a basic fact! And then his Lordship over there wants to sell! Your own land and your own courtyard are not for sale! Home and culture are closely interwoven; the struggle for your own plot of land and home is the struggle for your own culture.

**I**n the examples given above the house is the symbol of the decline and corruption of the society and repairing same means belief in the future. This is no doubt expressed in the finest and deepest manner by the Surinamese author Leo Henri Ferrier in his first novel *Atman*, in which a young man, Lonnie, after a stay in Europe, returns to his native country and stays at an old manager's house belonging to a plantation near Nieuw-Amsterdam. When he approaches the house across the river, he notices the state it is in: "*Everything is rotten, rusted, moulded. Snakes that might be wreathing about in the coolness of this non-existence, a terrifying thought. Ouroekoekoes, sweepies and re-*

*diteres, which can stand upright on the devilish point of their tails. Perhaps also kroektoeteres — scorpions — which live hidden in moulded wood. Sixteen high units, once whitewashed, support this dead past, which is becoming inaccessible. Almost all the iron bars with baroque ornaments, stuck into balustrades of the large back, downstairs and upstairs verandas, fallen out because of rust*". This description is partially repeated once more two pages further on, which makes it still more emphatic.

"My house, a huge space, a hypnotizing presence there on the right bank of Surinam river", as manager's house a symbol of old colonial Surinam, after it was abandoned by its inhabitants used as a coffee warehouse. In this book Lonnie experiences a process of awakening and will struggle for a new cultural unity, which will bring together the different population groups in Surinam: "Do not regret the perishableness of your house. It has been the means that has brought you to the front where you have to fight."

The old house, the history, is not rejected, but quite the contrary it will be the foundation of a new culture, in which "Africa, India, Indonesia, the Caribbean and Latin-America" will be merged. "Stand up Lonnie and go to your house. Everything is in you. Let the non-existent be non-existent, so that now you can yourself really in yourself attain the highest and deepest being. (...) The others I will make glad with the plans. My plans for the house. That I would very much like to buy to be able to work there later on. To work and the atmosphere, close to that big unity, which I am allowed to know there. Where I can seek in New Amsterdam, a unity, a being, that is Commewijne. If it is possible. I have an order. From myself. The self that I am of myself. The self I had better become."

The enormous diversity in cultures from so many different sources, comes together in Caribbean man, who has the obligation to create in his own region an own home, an own Caribbean culture. Initially not having roots in one's native land and the looking back at the European, African or Asian past have to make way for feeling oneself at home in the Caribbean present. In literature this is often symbolised in the "house-motif" indicated above with a number of examples. ■

by Alice van Romondt

#### Antillean Poetry.

Article of an introductory nature published in the Nov/Dec. 1982 issue of "Ons Erfdeel".

Authors, who published in De Stoep, Simadan, Antilliaanse Cahiers, Watapana, Ruku and Kristof are reviewed with regard to similarities in choice and use of language, ideological background etc. They are not dealt with individually but in the context of the group to which they belong.

Author: Wim Rutgers.

Obtainable at 'Ons Erfdeel', Rijnvoortshoef 265, 4941 VJ Raamsdonkveer Holland.

#### Samico.

Collection of poems in papiamentu by Papy Cicilia.

Published by the printery "DECO", Bonaire.

Price: Naf 7.--

#### Social Security in the Netherlands Antilles.

Author: M.J. Boekhoudt.

Published by De Wit Stores, Aruba.

Revised version 1983.

#### De Nederlandse Antillen en de Verenigde Staten van Amerika.

Author: J. Hartog.

Published by De Walburg Press in 1983.

Obtainable at Van Dorp bookstores.

Price: Naf 13.50.

#### Medische aspecten van marinepersoneel en hun gezinsleden op Aruba (1983).

Author: M.J.J. Hoejenbos.

Obtainable at: Militaire Tehuis Aruba.

#### Literatuurlijst Nederlandse Antillen.

Compiled by the N.B.L.C. (Nederlands Bibliotheek en Lektuur Centrum), December 1983.

Obtainable at the Public Library of Aruba.

#### Memories of Saint Martin.

Netherlands part: 1852-1926, preceded by a short sketch of earlier history.

Author: J.C. Waymouth.

Published by Advocate Co. Ltd., Barbados.

#### Trade winds

Biweekly newsletter published in Bonaire by Laurie Freundel.

The magazine, which made its debut in January of this year, fills a long-felt communication gap on the flamingo island. Providing its readers with a wide range of information by way of announcements and ads, it also endeavours in an editorial column to contribute to the island's development.

Obtainable at the Trade Winds office, Antriol 153A, tel.4395

#### Na Kaminda pa Fiesta di Pasku.

Attractively illustrated booklet telling the story of the holy week. Originally published in Holland and intended for the mentally handicapped, it soon became very popular with children. The booklet was translated from the Dutch by Nydia Ecury, Jenny Fraai and Ruth Zefrin.

Published by the Antillean Bible Society Available in all Bookstores.

Price: Naf.4.- ■

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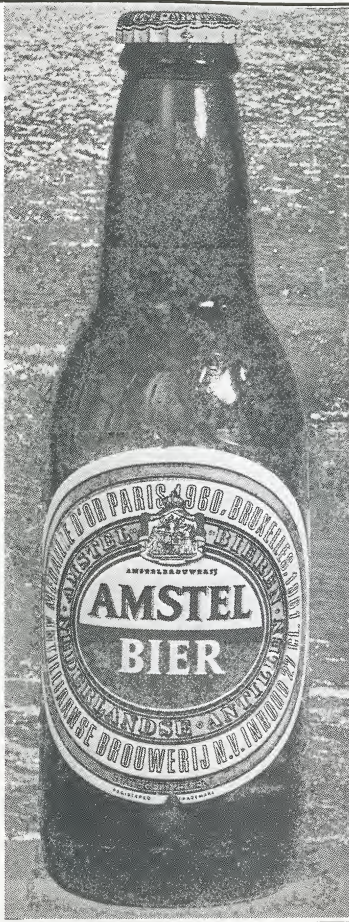
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